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A SPLENDID FORTUNE:

A Novel.

BY

THE AUTHOR OF "THE GENTLE LIFE."

VOL. III.

LONDON:
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A SPLENDID FORTUNE.

CHAPTER I.

THROUGH THE DARK WOODS.

POOR Lady Somers, after retiring to bed, sat for some time watching her sleeping child. Perhaps to persons in any deep affliction, especially one in which the mind is overworked and overweighted, the silent night brings more trials than any portion of the day. The young mother lay down upon her bed, and addressed herself to pray and to weep, but, indeed, without much success in either endeavour.

A nameless terror, utterly without foundation,

but not the less bitterly poignant, had taken possession of her soul. She made many resolves, and found each one less practicable than the last. She would wait till the morning, and then demand that Lotty Morton should proceed with her at once to the Earl, and tell him who she was, and what were her claims for his support and guardianship. Then arose within her mind the misery of her situation—without proof of her marriage; the extreme youth of her child, her own weakness, and a certain mental confusion of which she had grown acutely and very painfully sensible.

She heard Lotty Morton and Mrs. Lapis go up to their different rooms to bed, and she envied them their quiet sleep, even while she most suspiciously mistrusted them. She wondered at the doctor's absence, which might be protracted for some time, and she even suspected that honest, good fellow of a design of finding the register of her marriage and destroying it. She had read of such things in novels and newspapers, and asked herself why they should not occur to her. Every movement seemed to be surrounded with danger. Her husband had

spoken more than once to her of his sister-in-law, of her ambition, and the evident desire which he could very well perceive which that lady had of becoming the mother of the heir to the Bradstock estates. Emmy felt that such a desire was very natural, and saw plainly enough that her appearance and claims would be death to the hopes of this ambitious lady.

Her illness and affliction had been such that she had not been able to nurse her son; and a fine and strong young country wife, one of the many young damsels who gained their living in polishing, caning, and stuffing chairs in the factories at Bilscombe, had been provided, by the kindness and forethought of Dr. Morton, to fill one of the most important posts with regard to the heir of the earldom.

Although it must be conceded that Emmy looked upon the fondness of baby for this second mother with some kind of jealousy, which was perfectly natural on the part of one who was at once fond and weak, still she regarded the young woman with some little affection, and,

curiously, with a great deal more trust than any one else in the house.

The baby, however, slept generally in his mother's room, beyond which was a dressing-room, in which a bed had been placed for the young nurse, who came in at certain hours of the morning and fed the little child, or, if he was restless, which was indeed seldom, took him to her own bed. Emmy was wide awake when the nurse entered on the night referred to; and baby, who was not awake, did not, however, object, as indeed babies very seldom do, to an early or late meal, but took kindly to the nurse, and, half asleep and half awake, put his little arms out to her.

"You had better take him altogether, nurse," said Emmy, gently, "and then you will not wake me if you want him again."

"La, bless me, ma'm! are you awake?" said Mary, startled.

"I have been awake a long time," answered her mistress, quietly. She had been meditating painfully what to do, and had not solved the question.

"I'm 'fraid you're not well, ma'm," said the young nurse, pressing the baby warmly to her breast and kissing it. "Can I do anythin' for you?" She dropped her final g's, like the natives of that part generally; but she had a good heart, and her tone and manner touched her mistress. The nurse came and stood by her bed-side, still caressing the baby, whom she had learned to love almost as well as her own.

"No, Mary; no," said Lady Somers, sadly. "I am sorely puzzled, and don't know what to do. I am afraid I've been very wicked, that I should be so deserted."

"La, ma'm, indeed we are all wicked!" answered the little nurse, stating a general truth in a manner that showed plainly that she herself had not the least doubt about the matter. "We are all desperately wicked, ma'm; but, as my Joe says, it don't matter how wicked we are if we only lean on the Lord, ma'm. Please, ma'm"—here she dropped a courtesy—"if you were on'y at once to go straight to the Lord and lean on him, he wouldn't turn you away. I felt that so when my poor baby died."

As the soft voice of Mary said these words, the tears of poor Lady Somers fell fast. Lean on the Lord, indeed ! The words, Miss Nightley would have said, were of that " horrid, foolish language " taught by the Dissenters about Bilscombe ; and, in fact, Mary and Joe, who was a steady young carpenter, belonged to those obscure religionists who at one time were very numerous and strong at Bilscombe Regis, and would on Sunday afternoons meet in the beautiful park, and under some wide-spreading tree troll out a psalm in a manner more remarkable for its fervour than for its harmony. To Emmy the phrases used by the little nurse were slightly strange. She had been taught somewhat perfunctorily what religion was, but she knew nothing or little of fervour or faith. To be good, gentle, upright, and pure, such was her simple creed : she did not even imagine that she could approach to cast her burden down, or could lean on that Saviour to whom she prayed in awe-struck accents, and of whom the little nurse talked so very familiarly.

As the poor lady still wept and said nothing,

Mary, regardless of catching cold, still continued her exhortations. "Ah, ma'm," she said, "I'm afraid you haven't had experiences! Perhaps the Lord hasn't come to you. Well, he come to me, ma'm, when I was quite young, when poor father died and mother had to send us all out to work; and many's the mornin' that I've risen to work, and fasted through the day, to make up some little to pay for poor father's buryin'. But we're all right now, ma'm. He come to us all, and give us faith, he did; and I'm 'appy now, I am, for I know my little angel's a-singin' round His throne."

The country girl with the baby at her breast looked up as purely as a saint, with a rapt gaze of adoration which Emmy remembered for a long time after. Her mistress stayed her tears and dried her eyes.

"Mary," she said, "thank you for what you have said. I am not at all cross with you—not at all. Take care of the baby, and promise me that, whatever happens to me, you will never desert it till it is strong and well. I am sure I can believe you. You will promise me, will you not, Mary?"

Mary thought her mistress was going to be very ill or was somewhat mad, and that her request was preposterous; but she said nothing, but promised quietly.

"As I hope in Him, I will, ma'm," she said: "no one shall take it from me. Shall I come to bed with you, ma'm? Perhaps you'd be more quiet with the baby."

"No, Mary; no, thank you, my good girl," said the young mother, rising and kissing her humble friend. "I believe you that He is with you, and I, too, want to pray for his help."

And so, as Mary said afterwards, she left the poor young widow to "wrestle in prayer, and to obtain comfort." Mary's language was somewhat symbolical; for she had been brought up by a sect which depended for every morsel of its mental food upon Eastern imagery and strong language; and Mary herself somewhat astonished her superiors in position by her accurate knowledge of one book, and the wideness and soundness of her interpretations of the contents of that one book. Did not Peter Daniel Huet, who spent a life of ninety-five

years in reading and commenting on the fathers, and who edited the celebrated edition of the classics, "In Usus Serenissimi Delphini," declare that he read the Scriptures three hours daily, not only for the excellence of the matter contained in them, but also for the wonderful style, which benefited, as he said, every scholar and every thinking man? And why should not our little chair-maker be benefited in the same way?

When Mary had left her mistress to prayer, she heard her shut the door between the two rooms, and, as she supposed, betake herself to prayer by falling on her knees. The night was fresh, and, indeed, somewhat gusty, and the great beeches which grew near Cold Blow, and higher up, as well as lower down the sides of the hills, beat their great branches together in the wind or moaned with a rustling noise; so that it was really not to be wondered at if our little friend the nurse, lured and lulled by the warmth of her bed, the soft embraces of her young charge, and her own quiet peace of mind, should, after she had said a simple prayer, fall very soundly asleep.

The young widow did not, however, do so. As soon as she heard—for her sense of hearing had become almost painfully acute—that the nurse had fallen asleep, she rose from her knees—she had not, indeed, prayed—and hurried on her dress. The sighing of the wind and rustling of the boughs of the trees prevented any slight noise that she made from being heard; and, moreover, the young widow used every precaution and was as noiseless as a fairy. Alas, all her trouble was of little use! Lotty Morton, who was the lightest sleeper of her three guardians, was as soundly somnolent as ever she had been, and, moreover, was at a greater distance from the widow's room than Mrs. Lapis, who, with her head covered over with a shawl and merely half-undressed, so as to be very watchful indeed, had kept awake just the requisite time to plunge her in the very deepest of slumbers, from which hardly the fall of Cold Blow and the rattle of its beams and rafters would have awakened her.

So, the doctor's rough dog Boxer having grown past service, and having been despatched by a *coup de grâce* to the Hades of faithful dogs, there was

no one in the house to give the alarm ; while the poor lady, with her heart nerved to a certain firm and mischievous courage, prowled about the house, selecting her thickest boots, her shawls and bonnet, her purse and reticule, preparatory to her flight.

Soon she was upon the stairs, pale, bold, and defiant, ready to grapple with and overthrow the valiant Mrs. Lapis, should she meet her ; for the most delicate ladies have a pretty shrewd notion of punching and beating, and, indeed, utterly overthrowing one of their own sex, could they but meet them in a fair field, and when they are thoroughly indignant with them. And so this timid little widow, madly flying from her best friends, without purpose, with a confused and weakened brain, indeed carried in that brain a valiant determination to effect the one fixed longing for escape, and would, had she met our good old friend, have doubtless overthrown her.

Happily, Mrs. Lapis was quietly asleep ; and the orderly and silent doors of the doctor, to the due oiling of the hinges of which Keith Morton himself saw to periodically, opened noiselessly and let her

out; chains fell before her noiselessly, too; bolts were withdrawn by those tiny and weak white hands; and, merely latching the street or front door after her, she went out into the cloudy, gusty night, and into the wood, now as dark as the most desperate highwayman could desire, and now brightly light from the moon, which was high in the heavens and now and then shone brightly forth from behind a cloud.

Timid as the young lady was, she had somehow in her brain one fixed purpose which overcame all fear; and she walked boldly forward through the dark woods, although at another time she would have been terrified at the very sight of her own shadow cast on the side of an old staircase by the very candle which she held. It was a pleasant night, or rather morning, for the witching hours had passed; and the smell of the fresh earth, and of the damp, dead leaves, borne upon the breeze, which now was gentle, and then, as if by magic, quickened to a gust, was inexpressibly sweet to her. She walked quickly on, seeming more strengthened at every yard of the way. What her purpose was she

hardly knew. She at one time thought of going straight to the Abbey, at another of reaching London by some means, and there, either by help or by trusting to some agent, finding out the church where she was married, and then boldly confronting her father-in-law. At the same time there was a curious feeling in her mind that her pursuit was of itself so romantic and so foolishly undertaken, that, if she were captured or fell into the hands of her enemies, they could easily twist from her sufficient to justify their probable assertion that she was mad.

To utterly baffle and defeat these enemies, which, after all, were mere creatures of the imagination, as far as she knew in reality, the young widow hastened onward and pressed her speed far beyond her strength.

The wood which extends on the Oxford road some four miles from Bilscombe Regis she quickly passed, and she was sorry enough when she got beyond its friendly shelter. At the same time she was glad to see that the moon, which had now and then shone out so brightly, had become thoroughly

obscured, and that the wind had fallen altogether, whilst over her head the clouds were driving fast into masses and piling themselves into vaporous mountains with a threatening air of storm and rain. Her eyes had become so accustomed to the light, or rather visible darkness, that she could see that rain would soon fall, and was even rather glad of it than not, because, as she said, "the people in the market-carts, if they meet me, will hurry on and not notice me."

"Poor little baby!" she said to herself, looking back: "it is for him and for his rights that I go. That good girl will do all she can for him, I am sure, and I shall not be away long. They can't do anything to the baby: it is me, it is myself that I fear."

The rain, which had been long threatening, began to fall, at short intervals, in single, heavy drops, which betokened a sharp shower shortly; but it was so dark that, had any one passed her, she would not have been seen; and as for market-carts, there were none to pass, it not being market-morning at Oxford, and the long trail of

town-going vehicles, luckily or unluckily, not to be met with in that part.

Presently the rain came down smartly, and Emmy hurried on, encumbered by a thick shawl, and growing exhausted by her exertions. Still she struggled on in a courageous way, furnished with courage by that which makes timid creatures often more brave than the bravest men—a fear of being captured.

Wet, tired, and becoming indeed quickly exhausted, Emmy walked still rapidly on, getting farther and farther from the wood, and at each step feeling less alarmed at any chance of pursuit.

“They are all asleep, I know,” said she to herself, “and I shall be able to reach some town and hide myself away, and then get to London.”

While she comforted herself with this idea, the clouds grew lighter, and the first faint, dim light of the morning broke about her—not even a twilight, but a certain sign that light was coming and that darkness would pass away.

Emmy hurried on her steps; but the haste and excitement were too much for her; and

she rested for a moment on a rustic stile, to look around her, and to mark where she was. Beyond the stile stretched a ten-acre field, through which, intersecting the almost square field by cutting it into two unequal triangles, ran a broad and beaten path, which led to a little wood. Thinking that the path might lead to some by-road, and, indeed, might be, perhaps, a nearer cut to the unknown town whither she was hastening, the frightened lady crossed the stile and went towards the wood, hoping, in the very worst case, to gain some shelter from the storm.

She soon reached the fir-trees, which in the faint light looked thicker and more than they really were, and, happily, beyond them saw a little Gothic church, very new and very pretty, from the chancel of which a faint light streamed, and from which, too, rose a sound of voices. Hardly crediting her own ears, Emmy staggered up to the priest's door and listened. She heard a measured chant, which ceased, and then what seemed a blessing. She, too, knelt to receive it, her brain on fire, her body weak and exhausted.

"She told me," she said—"Mary told me to seek Him. So I have found Him here without seeking: He will help me, or I will die."

She gave a faint knock at the little door as she fell upon her knees praying; but the rustling of the few footsteps and the constant falling of the rain prevented any one from hearing. Father Pen Gargle, and sundry zealous neophytes, some stray sheep from a neighbouring church, were celebrating their orisons. He was used to early hours; and the good man, indeed, knelt both late and early to offer up his prayers at heaven's gate.

He did not hear the sound; he was wrapped in his dismissal prayer; and it was only until his neophytes had disappeared and he himself came forth at the priest's door, that he found the figure of Emmy prostrate and in a swoon.

CHAPTER II.

THREE ENDS OF A SKEIN.

IN the little Belgian towns through which the delighted English tourist passes, dressed—the traveller, and not the towns—in those curiously uncomfortable suits which cheap tailors frantically advertise in the autumnal season, and the British tourist more frantically adopts; in these quiet towns, little sleepy hollows of continental life, where a man might dream himself back into the Middle Ages, one finds curiously neat and clean retreats, in which certain good women of a religious order, having retired from the world, nurse and tend others who have been more shattered in health than themselves.

For the world—in spite of defiant materialism and bold go-ahead Americanism, fire brand-new from the phoenix fire which has burnt up everything except the big bird itself—does certainly distress, dilapidate, and shatter certain poor mortals. It is supposed that the great and strong men get over this, and escape it altogether; but if any one will walk London streets, or Paris streets, or the streets of any town on the globe, he will mark, if he choose to be contemplative, the lines of care and the furrows of anxiety upon every face past twenty-five. Will not many recall the anecdote of Sir Joshua Reynolds having remarked to David Garrick that he began to look old in his face? “Ay; and, egad!” said Davie, firing up—for none of us like to bear the signs of age, so proud are we—“if your face had had half the wear and tear that mine has, you would look old too.” Out in the world there is an immense deal of wear and tear; but in these quiet retreats the faces of the sisters wear a placid calmness difficult to imagine; a sort of set countenance which one might wear awaking up from a calm, long sleep,

and without dreams. They move about their chambers, cleanly white-washed, and with black doors and skirting-boards, noiselessly ; almost as noiseless as are the figures in the old paintings of such scenes, of which many are to be seen. So quiet are the towns where these retreats are to be found, that the hurried tourist, contrasting the quiet which he finds with the noise he has left, wonders that any one should need it there, and sighs to stay himself a long time in such a quiet, calm, deserted place, to unpack his full brain or unburden his loaded and stuffed bosom.

Many good English people have sighed to think that there are no retreats like these in England, where men and women, too broken and shattered by the world, might retire for a breathing space of time before they left the world in its noisy, busy course. And, of late years, some have been founded ; but, even at the time when Father Peh Gargle, coming out at the priest's door, found Lady Somers fainting thereat, many good persons of his faith had founded sisterhoods and retreats wherein, in poverty and quietude, ladies passed their lives in

religious duties, and in preparing themselves for another and a better world.

Pen Gargle, in changing the form of his religion, had taken with him the soft heart which yields to every call of pity; and as he gazed at Emmy he felt the softest compassion for her. "Poor thing!" he said; "so young, so fair, and yet so careworn and deserted! This has been, no doubt, some flower rudely plucked and ruthlessly thrown away."

Then he thought that God had bent her wandering feet, perhaps, to that door, that she might be led to repentance. He stooped to raise her, and carried her into the chancel, and there, by the light still burning on the altar, noticed the ring upon her finger. But he was not so unaccustomed to the world that he did not know that many wore that plain gold ring almost as a mockery, at any rate as a blind and a deceit, and he shook his head sadly. He called for assistance, however, and had her removed to a house which stood not far from the church, where ladies clothed in black, in garments strange to English eyes, and stranger then

than now, lived in poverty and prayer. The poor lady was very ill ; her over-exertion had been too much for her ; she wandered in her mind, and told of matters which the good father heard, but which he kept sacred ; and there, in this retreat, where she remained many months, free at least from harm and from her enemies' pursuit, we will leave her.

When the Lady Amethyst and her companion stood near the artificial waterfall in Broadacres Park, the latter had promised her friend and employer to busy herself upon her side, and to undertake certain commissions, which she had duly performed with but little success.

The interview with Father Gargle had been productive of little good. The priest read the two ladies like a book ; for, as luck would have it, he had, at the Retreat near the Chapel of the Piscatorians, met with a solution of their riddle ; and although Miss Nightley went so far as to assure the father that it would be greatly to his benefit, and no less to that of his order and his Church, that the estate of Broadacres with its ancestral title should pass into the family of one professed the

Roman Catholic religion, the good man withstood the temptation, and merely gave the ladies some very good moral advice, which had a great deal more of the Christian priest in it than that of the partisan. When he left Miss Nightley was inclined to be indignant.

"There, now, Amethyst," said she, familiarly; "that man is a riddle. Does not everybody suppose that he, a convert or a pervert, whichever you choose to term him, would be anxious for the benefit of his Church?"

"No doubt he is," said the lady; "but he fancies, perhaps, that he will not benefit it by any intrigue on his part."

"Intrigue, forsooth! is he not always intriguing? Does not history tell us of the intrigues of priest, bishop, and Jesuit? Is not fiction full of it?"

"That is all very true," said Amethyst, sadly; "but perhaps history does not always say what is the fact; and as for fiction, I imagine people write a great deal of what they know nothing. They bear false witness against their neighbour, in fact."

"Oh, if you take it so, you may. What are you to do in your case?"

"I am sure I don't know: I am puzzled."

"Will you let things take their course? If so, some fine morning you will be prepared to turn out and let the son of nobody, perhaps a pretender, push you from the door." Miss Nightley spoke dramatically, and not entirely literally, in employing this image.

"Well," said Amethyst, "suppose we leave the matter to the Earl: he will see all things properly cared for."

"Properly cared for!" said the companion, indignantly: "his proper care means this:—He is an old and a weak man"—the speaker had not forgotten the haughty look and gesture of the old nobleman as applied to herself—"and, like all old and weak men, nothing would please him more than some baby to dandle, especially if any one could be got to swear that it was his son's. That your quiet, virtuous, awkward doctor is prepared to do. I hate those quiet men, who look as if butter would not melt in their mouths."

“How do you know that Dr. Morton is prepared to act so dishonestly?”

“I know this: he has gone to London. I heard it in the town. Now what do you think his purpose in London can be?”

“To buy medicines, perhaps,” answered Lady Amethyst, with seeming carelessness, although inwardly pleased at the partisanship which her companion was showing.

“To buy medicines! to buy poison, you mean. I hate doctors; half their drugs are poisons; and Voltaire was right when he said that they put drugs of which they knew nothing into bodies of which they knew less.”

“Your authors are cynical, Ellen, and you quote them with pleasure. What other business can the doctor have in London? I believe he is a clever chemist, poor man! and is forced to compound his own prescriptions—or prepare them, that is the better word. Perhaps he will also get some of his instruments sharpened, instruments blunted by hacking away at the hard limbs of country bumpkins.”

“Pray don’t twit me with being cynical, my lady,” said Miss Nightley, with a bitter smile: “I see you can hit pretty hard when you like. Yes, he will get his instruments sharpened, no doubt; but they will be those which, by a cunning and no doubt a legal amputation, will cut off this fair estate and this splendid fortune from you and yours for ever. This matter must be met; and, as you have been kind enough to confide in me, I will meet it.”

“Thank you,” said the lady, with a gleam of real gratitude—for favours to come, let us remember with Rochefoucauld, as the companion took care to remind the lady—“Thank you, Ellen; and to meet it you will want money. You can depend on me. Will you go to London?”

“The time will come, no doubt, for doing so. When does Father Gargle call again?”

“To-night he dines with us—frugally, of course, and with my husband and yourself. Lord Bradstock dines in his own room.”

“Let us see whether we can get more out of him then,” said the companion.

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The priest came and went, but with the same result as before. The conversation was general; and Miss Nightley shone with a lurid lustre peculiarly her own. Happily for her, as she thought—for she was a great believer in luck—after she bowed forth the Piscatorian father with a great many obeisances, she had that interview with the young gentleman from London which has been recorded.

When she had ushered Stannard out of the Abbey she was triumphant. But she well knew how to keep a secret, and, except that she obtained some money from Lady Amethyst, that lady knew little or nothing of her business. Nor after the little pocket-book purse and its contents had been some time in the possession of her companion was Amethyst any the wiser.

"We are on the eve of a discovery, my lady," she said, "and one that will benefit you greatly. But don't ask me anything, and don't speak to me. I have it all here," she said, tapping her capacious forehead; "but it is at best a mangle-mangled matter. When I am thinking I cannot talk."

"That's strange!" said Amethyst, with some

curiosity. "Many persons talk without thinking."

"Many do, no doubt; but I am not one," was the short but sufficient answer.

Miss Nightley's reasons for not saying anything to Lady Amethyst were weighty ones. When, in the park, she had opened the pocket-book and taken out the marriage certificate, she started like one stung. She had been hitherto pursuing her game of mischief merely in a general way, out of a wide-spread and thoroughly impartial hatred to her own sex and mankind in general; but when she saw the two names the document contained, then she received a new inspiration. They were those of Felix Bradstock and Emma Everingham; and one of these, the latter, she knew well, and hated cordially. For, when Miss Nightley had been a teacher in a fashionable school, and one much snubbed and looked down upon, the favourite pupil of whom all spoke well, who was petted, caressed, and made much of, was a beautiful girl, Emma Everingham, ten years the junior of the envious teacher,

The name assumed by the young lord had struck her as familiar, but she did not know that it belonged to her old enemy, the daughter of the fashionable London physician, who was then making a rapid fortune. Miss Nightley had spent since then many years abroad, perfecting herself in foreign languages, and had not heard of the change of fortune and the death which had brought her and her hated pupil, the gentle, handsome girl, to the same social level.

Gentle Miss Everingham always was; but girls are full of merriment and *esprit*, and in some of her replies Emmy had made a remark, intended to be harmless, which Miss Nightley had construed into a reflection on her face and hair. She had envied and disliked the girl before, and now she hated her. Emmy was thoughtless and indolent at school; and the governess—such is the justice of parents and schoolmistresses—often gets blamed for faults which belong entirely to the pupils. Hence other occasions arose for the continuance of the hatred. Not that with many of us there need be much occasion for the exercise of that passion.

We first injure, and then we detest. But it was otherwise with Miss Nightley, since she believed that her pupil, rich, beautiful; and beloved by all, had sneered at her homely looks and poverty.

"And so," she said, "it is this girl after all. How dull was I not to see this before! I remember that my heart burned at the name, but I little thought that that name, not wholly an uncommon one, did indeed belong to my enemy."

Her resolution was quickly taken. Having made an accurate copy of the paper, she destroyed the original, preserving, however, the little purse and the portrait it held, and, going back to Lady Amethyst, got from her the address of "our Mr. Naylor," for the express purpose of consulting him.

In the meantime Herbert Stannard, forgetting any obligation that he had to Mr. Pegwell Bay—for he was one to make promises, even to himself, and to forget them—made his way to Liverpool, whence he embarked in a sailing-vessel to New York, there to seek his fortune. His original desire of vengeance on Captain Tophill died down

just when he had some means at last of accomplishing it. "That woman," said he to himself, apologizing for his own want of purpose and cowardice, "can take care of herself. She loves not me, nor even cares for me : why should I care for her?" Thus comforting himself, he arrived at that vast emporium, that home and haven of the unfortunate and the lazy, indeed also of the refuse and scum of Europe. How he succeeded there it is not, at present, in our purpose to inquire.

Miss Nightley arrived in London, and soon found out Mr. Naylor. That profound legal practitioner had not succeeded in captivating either of his partners, and the business had been for a long time manifestly falling off. His partners, therefore, did what sensible and shrewd men, as they were, might have been expected to have done. "We suck oranges," said some philosopher, "and we throw them away." Mr. Naylor was in this instance the orange. Messrs. Sharker and Co. found it high time to get rid of him ; which was not to be wondered at, as, having ingratiated themselves with the very best clients of the house, they

had little need of him. In truth, they found Mr. Naylor to be, in spite of his cunning, essentially incapable and unworthy, with, moreover, such an inexhaustible element of languor and laziness about him that he never was in proper time at his office. Hence the dissolution of partnership had been duly announced in the "Gazette," and, on Miss Nightley's arrival at his office, our friend with the pale, greasy face, red hair, and red fringe of whiskers, was standing with his back to the office-fire, staring out of the window, and wondering what next, and next.

"Our Mr. Naylor"—"our" no longer—could command a very good view of all those who approached him, over the half-blind of his window; and, seeing the tall and stately companion coming to his door and actually ringing his office-bell, he pricked up his ears, and sat down hastily at his table, covered with dirty papers bound with red tape, and appeared immersed in work.

"A client, I hope," he said to himself. "I hope it is about to turn out something. A good Chancery suit would set me up; and how Sharker

and Co. would bite their lips ! serve them right, the devils." Indeed, Mr. Naylor felt that he had been hardly used by these sharp practitioners. His managing clerk had suddenly jumped up into his position, and had carried away with him all that was valuable out of the wreck of his business. "Or it may be a divorce case. Fine woman, that. Well, there's some distinction and money to be gained even from the vices of our fellow-creatures."

A young clerk opened the door, who looked very bloated and unhealthy, and was much stouter than a person of his age should be, being probably swollen by idleness and rich living at cook-shops. He told the lady that Mr. Naylor was at home, but, he thought, engaged. He himself had been engaged in trying to kill one or two autumn flies, which had been drawn out by the warmth of the first fire, with the end of a ruler ; and the young man knew very well that his master was about as busy as himself.

"I hope he is not engaged upon any particular business, as I want to see him very much," said the lady.

“Well, mum, if you’ll walk into the hoffice, I will see, mum.” The stout clerk had also a fondness for the theatre and theatrical pursuits, and was at the head of a “Thespian Club,” which met at an adjacent public-house, at which club he would, with all the majesty of *Cæsar* and the vengeance of *Iago*, recite, rave, and madden, to the great delight of his admirers. “I will see, mum,” he said, in a theatrical air, intended to be bewitchingly polite, “if you will take a chair in my hoffice.”

“My hoffice” was mouldy enough. Three horse-hair chairs, once black, but now worn into dusty streaks, as to their seats, were stuck about the room, and did not give a very inviting appearance. One or two tin boxes stood upon shelves round the room. These were japanned in a fashion very prevalent with lawyers’ boxes, and which leads the beholder to fancy that, having been recently painted black over red, the artist has dabbed his thumb at regular intervals on the cases, so as to take off the black, and leave the red below to show itself. On these boxes were painted initials, names, or titles; such as, “A. M’F., Esq., 1825”—“The Fairford

Estate"—"Captain Tophill's Settlements," &c.; but it is but fair to say that by far the better part of this furniture, without which a lawyer's office would look as unfurnished as a grocer's without canisters, or a publican's without sham barrels, had been carried off by the retiring partners.

The office did not look inviting. On the sloping desk, which was large enough for six, and only occupied by one clerk, was a huge blotting-pad formed of a half-quire of blotting-paper curiously tied at the corners with red tape; but the ink stains on it were not recent, and a caricature of the tyrant Cook of an ancient date figured on one corner of it. Mr. Cook having been engaged as a clerk himself for many years, was, as he said, "up to all the dodges of those young gentlemen, and bowled them out accordingly." And accordingly our Thespian hated him with a malignant, *Iago*-like hatred, and seldom let an opportunity slip of embroiling him with his partners. Hence between Mr. Naylor and this clerk there arose a fellow-feeling which led to an intimacy, and resulted in the Thespian "clinging like a gallant tar, who

knew his duty, to the old ship, although she was labouring in a heavy sea and a'most upon the rocks."

The quick eye of Miss Nightley saw at once the state of the office as she glanced round it. "I see how it is," she whispered: "this man is the man for me." She did not see her way clear to sitting down on any of the worn-out chairs, because each of them, as is, indeed, the wont with horsehair chairs *in extremis*, stuck out cunningly at each corner a cruel piece of brass, which tore the trousers of smart clerks, and afforded much amusement to the Thespian, who gloated over the discomfiture of his victims. She noticed, however, that up the dirty window crawled a poor half-frozen, half-warmed fly, which had probably tried to hybernate in some of the dusty corners of the room, but, in despair, had come to life again.

"Umph," she said; "I suppose the wretch takes his victims in as a spider would that fly. Now is the time to see whether *he* cannot be taken in."

"Please, mum," said the Thespian, suddenly flinging open the door with a theatrical air, which Miss Nightley admired as she noticed it—"Please, mum, Mr. Naylor will see you, although he has been and is engaged upon important business." The Thespian said this confidentially, as if to imply that he had interceded with his learned employer, and had dragged him away from his severe business, and that Miss Nightley should indeed be very much obliged to him for his good offices.

The companion, accustomed to higher play, read this vulgar little fellow as she would have read a child's book of one syllable and in large type. "Why do servants," she said, "fancy that they are such important mediums of communication between us and their masters?" Nevertheless she bowed politely to the clerk, anticipating that she might hereafter want him, and was ushered in to the busy lawyer, who, with his muffin-face bent down to a sheet or so of blue-wave draft paper, was engaged, or apparently so, in concocting a letter.

Immediately the lady appeared, and had, as it were, with her own eyes, seen his deep abstraction, Mr. Naylor jumped up, and would have offered her a chair had he not been anticipated by the Thespian, who, this politeness performed, left the room and closed the door after him.

CHAPTER III.

A FLOWN BIRD.

ONE of the most annoying matters in life, of which there are a great many, not too many, perhaps, but this by the way, is to have lost anything. We may not actually want the thing lost; but then, if it is a piece of property, we desire to put our hands on it; we are puzzled, confused, worried, put out of temper, and thoroughly discomposed. We may follow the example of the housekeeper, and sweep our chamber till we find that which is lost; but if we do not find it—there is the rub. A poet has told us that he could sometimes hunt half a day for a forgotten dream: what shall we do if that which is mislaid and forgotten be not a dream, nor a thing, but a person?

When the morning sun came up lusty and red over the beeches of Bilscombe Regis, Lotty awoke from a happy, refreshing slumber, and, turning round, withdrew her curtains, and, reaching her hand to the little table by her bed-side, rang a hand-bell.

To her entered Mrs. Lapis, dreadful, in a night-cap and cork-screw curl-papers. The dear good woman was never much of a shape when dressed in her best; for crinoline then was not; but, as she came in to see Lotty, that young lady smiled as her eyes fell upon the tall, straight, white figure who, with a summer bed-gown wrapped round her, answered her summons.

"Well, Mrs. Lapis, you have heard no stir?"

"Not a bit, miss, and I have been awake 'most all the night. Ah me! I never get any comfortable slumber now as I did when dear Lapis was alive. He used to waken then, poor man, with thinking, poor fellow, of scientific matters. He died o' too much thought, miss: he was all brain."

"And you are all tongue: a good pair," thought

Lotty, though she spoke not a word of such thought. "Well," she said, aloud, "I am glad you are looking so composed and well. Now, tell me, have you been to Lady Somers's room?"

"Bless you, she isn't stirring," said the house-keeper, "and I wouldn't wake her, poor thing! she has need of all the sleep she can get, I vow."

The observation seemed reasonable; and Lotty, although very fond of a morning's nap, a weakness not uncommon with some ladies, rose and dressed herself, sending Mrs. Lapis to bed, in consideration of a wakeful night.

"Poor dear Keith!" thought Lotty, as she threw open the window: "I wonder how he gets on in smoky London. He has now been there two days, and we have not heard from him. Perhaps a letter will come to-day." So, while all the house was sleeping, or the servants only just rising, and the nurse was quietly washing and dressing the fat boy-baby, Miss Lotty was down and about the house, opening the windows and enjoying the fresh air.

A little room, which served for parlour, sitting-

room, and dining-room—the doctor boasted of no drawing-room—and which opened on a small lawn, which, by the way, ran down-hill, and, being exposed to the sun, was always brown in summer, was that in which Lotty first went; and then, opening the shutters and windows in the silent house, she stepped on to the grass and watched the sun getting stronger, more glorious, and less red as he hastened on his course.

“We shall have a splendid day,” said Lotty, looking at a little glass outside the window, and then trailing a China rose in and out a trellis-work.

“The doctor,” she continued, “might make this a nice place, poor fellow, if he had heart. But he has lost it, and in the most foolish way. Of course there is a good deal in love and all that, but men do not know how to take it like women do. If every woman were to pine and keep single because she missed her ideal, bless me, there would be no marriages at all!”

This chain of thought led her to look at Lady Somers’s window, which was above the parlour. The blinds were still down; and Lotty, thinking

she slept soundly, went into the parlour, and, sitting down, took up a prayer-book, opening it at the Psalms for the day.

By-and-by down came Mary, fresh and pleasant as a rose, carrying the baby. She already loved it almost as her own, though it was so silent and quiet. Its failings, as a baby (for I beg to hold the opinion that babies should now and then kick, struggle, cry, squall, and make a pleasant or unpleasant noise as their case requires), were, of course, with the logic of women, exalted into a virtue.

“Bless him! Look, miss,” said Mary: “isn’t it a lamb?”

She gave the lamb a sounding kiss and held it to Lotty, who was not so very gushing towards babies—at any rate, in private—as some young ladies are in public. She, however, bent over it and gave its soft little solid face a kiss.

“Yes; he’s very nice; smells very much of violet-powder and new bread. Don’t you think babies smell like new bread, Mary?”

“Bless ’em,” said the nurse; “p’rhaps they do,

miss. I never thought o' bread, miss, but I have of milk many a time; new milk, just warm, miss."

"Perhaps it's that," said Lotty. "And how is his mother? You went to fetch him, of course?"

"No, I didn't, miss. He slept with me, the lamb, all night; as still as mice, miss; took his food as quiet as a pretty dear darling. Oh, I wish he was mine, I do! and I'd walk off with him barefoot."

"He's by far too precious for that, Mary," said Lotty, spreading the breakfast table-cloth. "How did Lady Somers seem?"

"Bless you, miss, she's not stirring! She's been very quiet all night, and had a beautiful sleep. She told me to take baby and shut the door between us. That's all I heard of her, miss; for I soon dropped off with this lamb at my breast."

And so Mary hugged the lamb with that soft never-failing spring of love which women have for the child whom they nourish. If we hate those whom we injure, we love, and tenderly, too, those whom we benefit and help; and fine ladies may

thank Heaven that this, its beneficent will, applies even to the despised wet-nurse.

So Lotty peacefully went on with her work, giving the nurse and servant their breakfast, and then waiting awhile to listen if her brother's guest stirred. As, however, a long time elapsed before she did so, and Lotty began to get hungry, she thought that she would go round to the stable to see the Countess. Going, therefore, to the front door, the stables being a little way to the right-side front of the house, Lotty was startled to find it unfastened and the key on the mat. She had not seen the servant pass the parlour, the door of which was open, to "do the door," as that functionary called cleaning it, and Lotty was startled. Nevertheless, she went to the stables and found the boy already grooming the Countess.

"Have you been in the house, Tom?" she said.

"Yes, miss."

"How did you go in—at the front door?"

"No, miss; through the garden round by the back."

Lotty was puzzled.

"Well," she said, "that's funny. I was first down in the house, and I have not heard Sally stirring. Who can have gone out by that door?"

She hastened back, a thought flashing upon her mind; and, her old suspicions of the night previous gaining ground upon her, she ran up-stairs and knocked rapidly and loudly at the young widow's chamber door: there was no answer. She opened it: the bed was empty and cold, the dress gone, a large box opened, shawls, dress, and boots missing. Lotty felt her brain turn round and round in an undefinable dread and fear, and called loudly upon Mrs. Lapis.

It was all to no purpose. For the whole day, whilst there was hope of finding the lady, poor Lotty delayed sending the dreadful intelligence to her brother. Tom, on the back of the Countess, who made little of such a light weight, galloped hither and thither; Mrs. Lapis toiled one way, and Sally another; whilst Lotty took the hardest part, to her restless mind, of sitting at home keeping watch and ward over the precious baby, and silently waiting for the glad intelligence which

never came. At last, with tears in her eyes and trouble in her heart, Lotty sat down to write to her brother.

And while that letter is speeding as fast as a mail-coach can make a country post go, let us follow Dr. Morton to London, and see how he bestows himself.

The honest lawyer set his clerk at once about his business; but honest lawyers have not always clerks upon whom they can rely; and this one, who was not half so sharp, nor half as stout, as the Thespian, had a very bad habit, with which he allowed himself to be carried away. Instead of going to the right place, and making inquiries where his course would have been straight enough, he went to a place whence his path generally ended in becoming very crooked; namely, to the public-house; and there, having fuddled himself to his heart's content, dipped his head in some water, and came home, when it was too late to go again, with some irregular and not wholly comprehensible story of having lost the memorandum till he got back to the door, when he

found it in his shoe. The truth is, the man had holes in his pocket, and the tale was not so unlikely as Mr. Hosier thought it.

Upon this the honest lawyer immediately discharged him; but, after five minutes' reflection—for Mr. Hosier was hasty—he recalled his penitent servant and took him on again, but only on trial, for about the fourth time.

"It will only keep Dr. Morton in London for a day longer," said Frederick Hosier, gentleman by Act of Parliament and his own straightforward deeds. "He won't mind it. I will take him to a literary party to-night."

As the doctor had taken a sudden fancy, as ardent as usual, for this new friend, and, moreover, as he did not know how thoroughly easy the job was, and gave the proverbial delay of the law its full force, he was not very sorry about this extra day being lost, but went to a supper of some jovial souls, all known authors, friends of the literary lawyer, and warm friends too. At such a society as this, Mr. Hosier was in his element. When he earned a pound by literature he was, as

we have hinted, happier than when he had earned two by law. He regarded the press as the palladium of liberty, the terror of tyrants, and the Englishman's boast.

"Ah!" said he; "let me tell you, Doctor, that I, even I, small as I am, have done much good by that glorious engine;" and he went into a rambling statement of certain police and petty tyrannies overthrown, and of costermongers befriended, and of great ones on the Bench, or in the Cabinet, trembling at the *dicta* of editors of the cheapest newspapers. And let us remember that cheap newspapers were not, even a few years ago, what they are now, but were carried on, struggling with impecuniosity and bad management, and often earning a subsistence by the mere piquancy of their improper articles. The green and charming illusions of this honest lawyer, a hard-headed fellow in many respects, may perhaps be measured as much from his belief in the power of that kind of press, as anything.

Assembled in a large room, with several portraits of the theatrical and literary world, a

number of gentlemen, with square foreheads and intelligent looks, were engaged in smoking pipes and drinking beer. Many of them even went so far as to indulge in wine and cigars ; but brandy, whiskey, and beer were much more popular. Some wore moustaches ; many, long hair ; and one or two, turn-down collars, the Byronic fever for that article having taken them in their youth. An introduction to the chairman from Mr. Hosier, who was a member of the club, was sufficient ; and the doctor, having received a polite bow, took one of the Windsor chairs, and felt that he was indeed on poetic ground.

The nectar which he chose was Scotch ale ; and then, wondering at the quiet, mortal-looking aspect of some of the *Dii minores* of the press, he took up his pipe and prepared to listen.

If our country friend did not hear very much to improve him, he heard very much to astonish and amuse. A big man, with a ruddy countenance, and with his hair hanging in ringlets, was talking of a pamphlet which he intended to produce, upon the bad way in which England and English society

treated her men of genius, in excluding them from the first rank, in never, or seldom, rewarding them, and, in too many cases, overlooking them altogether. Many of his listeners seemed to sympathize with him ; and Hosier, and the doctor too, who regarded every author as a Heaven-born genius to be worshipped, were loud in their praise. But, against the curled darling, who, to do him justice, was a poet, and a not unknown nor undeserving one, a small, active gentleman, with white hair hanging over his forehead, and with an eye of flame, so bright and sparkling was it, opposed himself, covering the proposition with ridicule, asserting that literary men worked best when poor and unknown, and that the very best way to stop the independence of literature was to patronize and pension it. Would his friend, he asked, like to carry his long pipe and his brandy-and-water into the boudoir of a duchess? Was it not better, after the troubles of the day, or the week's work on the press, to come and take his ease at his inn, unnoticed and unknown, save by the good people around them?

Accompanying his argument, which was stated in short jerks, and without much eloquence, the latter speaker threw out pun, joke, and epigram in a surprising manner; and, although much of the wit was of a personal and local nature, and would therefore lose its brightness in being recorded, the doctor was completely won over by his argument to the other side, as indeed was also Hosier, who saw at once the plain prose, good sense, as distinguished from ambitious nonsense. But the poet was not to be extinguished, and with great earnestness and good temper rejoined, now and then speaking with rare eloquence. And so the evening passed; the Doctor Sangrado, as he compared notes with his friend, owning that he had seen finer and better dressed gentlemen, and less homely fare, but that he had heard seldom, if ever, more sense, eloquence, and wit. "But," said he to Hosier, as they parted in the street, about one o'clock in the morning, "why cannot our friends talk less about their profession and themselves, be now and then less profane, and put a little more calmness and earnestness into their

talk? why will they always talk about themselves?"

"Why, indeed!" said Hosier; "but I am sure I cannot tell you: that is a secret. Well, good night. To-morrow I will get that copy, duly attested, of course, and send it up to you: there will be no difficulty at all, I can assure you."

"No difficulty!" Those were the first words which recurred to the doctor when, at breakfast the next morning, he opened a letter from his sister, telling him briefly, and with evident pain on the part of the writer, that Lady Somers had fled from his house, she knew not where, leaving with her the nurse and the young baby; nay, that, moreover, they had sought her, sorrowing, for the whole day, without discovering one single trace of her whereabouts.

CHAPTER IV.

RETROSPECTIVE.

Six years had passed away, and those years had brought to Dr. Morton and his sister—to the latter especially—some little consolation for her whom they had lost. After a time the most romantic incidents lose their sharp outlines, their freshness and acute force, and become common-place. Indeed, nowadays there is little else but common-place for those who study newspapers. Such stories are daily brought to light in the columns of our contemporary historians, that the ordinary novelist is like “panting Time,” in Johnson’s hyperbolical verses on Shakspeare, and “pants after” them in vain. What is it for a young lady quietly to disappear from the neigh-

bourhood of a country house, leaving a child "chargeable," as the papers have it, to a kind country doctor? Do we not now hear of handsome widow-ladies, or young married women, with the plain gold ring ostentatiously shown on the fourth finger of their left hand, asking some benevolent old gentleman to take care of baby for a moment, and then passing through the refreshment room door and disappearing for ever, whilst an express train speeds on with the baby and the paternal-looking victim of a mother's cruelty and woman's treachery? No; one must allow that the disappearance of Lady Somers at a critical period is very common-place, to most people.

It was not, however, so to Dr. Morton: over him "the quiet sense of something lost" brooded like a shadow. The letter of his sister had recalled him hastily to Cold Blow, and he had searched almost every inch of the country for miles round. The sleek Countess grew thin and ragged with incessant work; the doctor's practice and the doctor's health alike suffered; and indeed the former would have suffered much more had not the curiosity of

several old ladies compelled them to become invalids for the purpose of calling in Dr. Morton and gossiping about the lost lady.

For poor Emmy, as soon as she was gone, was fully and thoroughly acknowledged to be the wife of Lord Somers. Opposition, in the heart of every one save Mr. Andrew Bradstock, Lady Amethyst, and Miss Nightley, had turned to pity. It was more than suspected that the poor lady had committed suicide; and, indeed, one or two country people came forward and volunteered the information of having met a lady clothed in white who was making towards the Slugg, or who was seen in the middle of the Ryde wringing her hands and weeping, or who had been noticed standing near that artificial cascade at which the companion of Lady Amethyst had suggested the propriety and local fitness of the act of suicide.

These rumours had a great effect upon Lady Amethyst, who felt that she was a guilty thing, knowing and thinking much more of her opposition than Lord Bradstock did or even the reader does; for Amethyst intended to fight the battle to

"the bitter end," even if opposed by his lordship himself. Luckily, Lord Bradstock, when he saw Dr. Morton's pale face and distressed look, gave up all the doubts he ever had entertained, and they were very few, of his son's marriage, and joined heartily in the search for the lost wife. Nor did he do this only. He roused himself from his lethargy, shook off his grief, under which old age was making rapid approaches and was undermining his castle walls secretly and suddenly, and went purposely to Cold Blow to see his grandson. One sight of the quiet little fellow drawing plenty of nourishment from his young nurse, and looking, as she said, modestly, and in allusion to the food she afforded him, "the very picture of health and happiness," overcame the old nobleman. He declared that he was the very picture of his lost son, and no doubt saw, or fancied that he saw, a likeness in him which it would have puzzled the sharp eyes of Miss Nightley or her patroness to find out.

Nor indeed did the hasty proceedings of the former lady do otherwise than hurt the cause of Lady Amethyst. Possessed of the document so

dearly purchased from Stannard, that lady had hastened up to London and instructed "our Mr. Naylor" at all hazards to secure the original. By so doing Miss Nightley not only, as she fancied, served Lady Amethyst, but she served herself. A complicity in any plot leads to a close intimacy with the plotters; and the lady, if she were unacquainted with law, knew human nature pretty well. She knew it far too well to let Mr. Naylor into the whole secret; but he divined well enough what was intended, and, being too clever himself to get compromised, promised for a very fair reward to manage the little business for his client. The Thespian clerk was deputed to act for him, and that gentleman deputed another in his place. The method of doing work by deputation is not confined to deeds of dirt and darkness alone. The wise and witty Sydney Smith said something so acute and bitter that everybody ought to hate him, as a satirist generally is hated, for having published it. "It is," said he, "not in human nature for A. to find B. starving and in want without calling upon C. to relieve him."

So A. called upon B., and C. set D. to work to go to the little church in —— Square, an old, faded, mouldy Queen Anne church, with nothing remarkable in it but its dirt and ugliness, and to obtain possession of that leaf of the book which contained the register of the marriage between Felix Bradstock and Emma Everingham. It happened, greatly to the delight of the worthy and shambling old gentleman, a *ci-devant* lawyer's clerk, long out of any situation, from his own innate roguery and drunkenness, that the church was, for a wonder, undergoing some sort of cleansing, and the smallest amount of repairs that would make it water-tight. The clerk, a feeble individual, upon whom the unaccustomed sight of two bricklayer's labourers, three ladders, and a pail or two of whitewash had a peculiarly depressing effect, was easily persuaded, after an hour's lounging intimacy with the legal gentleman, to run and fetch a drop of something warm for them to drink in the vestry whilst his friend made his search. In his somewhat long absence—for the mouldy and cold church gave him the rheumatism, and, moreover, he met a friend

at the bar of the public-house—the legal gentleman performed his hazardous duty much more quickly and safely than he dared to hope, and when the clerk came back had shut the book, and was standing carelessly surveying a slater who could be seen through a window, toiling up a ladder with a half-dozen of slates in his hand.

“Well, you have been quick!” said the ex-clerk of the lawyer to the clerk of the church, turning away his face purposely, and blowing his nose. “I’ve done my business; here is your fee; and I must be off. It is later than I thought. Did you see the clock at the public?”

The church clerk told his friend the time. “By the way,” cried that worthy, “that makes me half an hour too late. Now that won’t do, you know. Punctuality is the motto of my firm: half an hour behind time, and I’m a lost man.”

“I forgot the name of the gentleman you represent,” said the church clerk, feebly; “however, here’s a health to you. I brought it nice and warm, you see, although I was a bit of a time away.”

He was anxious to excuse himself in the eyes of his friend, and careless and thoughtless of anything else. It was usual enough, too, for lawyers' clerks to make a search, and no one had ever robbed the place before. What had not happened could never happen, of course, in the church of St. ———-the-Martyr. A confused muddle of names, made up for the moment, replied to, but did not answer the clerk's question, and his visitor presently took his leave. He was, altogether, a very modest, liberal gentleman, in the eyes of the church clerk, and had only one peculiarity about him, which was that he was exceedingly careful not to let his companion take a full view of his face. Had he seen it, the fuddled old fellow would not have remembered it; and the difficulty of the dishonest trick which had been played upon him was heightened by the imagination of the Thespian servitor.

That gentleman was in watch at a convenient distance, and soon saw, by the brisk step of his creature, that, in his own language, "the dark deed was done, and the spider's web had entangled

its victim." He walked hurriedly by the side of his agent, who shambled away as well as a pair of boots, very highly polished, but very much worn and tender about the soles, would let him. The latter's chief care was to keep the sole of his right boot, which, being cheap originally, had, since its first production, been subject to hard wear, from flapping on the pavement. He had done this by a piece of boot-lace cunningly tied over it; but the boot-lace had slipped off in the church, and the little difficulty between the sole and its wearer was renewed. The poor rogue, however, by a dexterous twist of his heel, managed to keep himself from falling, until, crossing and doubling in several busy streets, he plunged hastily into the open doors of a tavern the tap-room of which he was very well acquainted with.

The Thespian, having run him to ground, followed him at his leisure. It was too early in the day for any of the accustomed visitors to be in the room. A tired carman was sleeping with his head on one of the tables, leaning it heavily on his crossed arms, and breathing through his purple and

swollen lips calmly and deeply. Not to wake him, the two hangers-on of law spoke in that which the accomplished Thespian termed "the Morousky language," but which was not interesting, inasmuch as it was merely "back slang," in which both the Thespian and his coadjutor were quite at home. After complimenting him for his talent, and going to the bar and ordering some drink, the Thespian demanded the plunder, or, as he called it, the article, and pretended to be much surprised when the old gentleman refused to give it up. The refusal was not, however, of long continuance. The ex-clerk only wished to drive a better bargain with his employer than he would at first give; but at last the price was arranged amicably, and in whispers, with frequent looks at the sleeping carman, and the two friends withdrew, it is to be hoped, mutually satisfied.

It is not to be supposed that "our Mr. Naylor" was reckoning without his host; but Miss Nightley most assuredly was. When Dr. Morton left London he gave the prosecution of his design to the hands of his friend Jack Juniper and the

honest lawyer, the latter of whom could get on much better without him than with him. His clerk, conscious that he must not again fail, went the next morning, the morning of the very day on which the Thespian and his friend performed their little trick, to Somerset House, and procured a copy of the marriage register, which was duly forwarded to Cold Blow House. Miss Nightley had, in fact, in her revengeful haste and hatred of Emmy, merely outwitted herself partially. She had, however, done enough to make Lady Amethyst an accomplice after the deed; for the sheet of the book, so neatly cut out by the Thespian's ally that one could, with the closest scrutiny, scarcely see whence it was taken, was duly delivered to Lady Amethyst, and by her, in Miss Nightley's presence, hastily burned. It is due to her ladyship to say that she struggled very much against this deed, that she was horror-struck when she found what her companion had done, and that she protested against having ordered her companion to do it. But there was the witness against her in her own hand. No harm could be done, so her companion told her,

by destroying it. The baby might die, and then no one would be dispossessed. Her rival had also, so the governess said, dispossessed her and her children by a secret marriage, and was a cunning, wicked, artful girl. In short, partly in fear, partly out of persuasion, and greatly from ignorance, confusion, and conscious guilt, Lady Amethyst did the deed; and she, with perturbation, and the governess, with a wicked smile, watched the embers as the sparks slowly, and each with a dying flash, burnt themselves out of the thick paper.

To Lady Amethyst's astonishment, the companion, deftly enough, but slowly and deliberately, picked with her fingers the ashes from the fire. She explained herself shortly.

"I have heard," she said, "of such things as these being brought to light even from the ashes—not of the dead: I don't believe in ghosts or any kind of spirits—but of the grate. This shall not be so now, at any rate. They shall never find you out."

She said "you," and already assumed a sort of superiority in the partnership of guilt. Lady

Amethyst looked up amazed, but hardly dared to question her.

"Well," continued the *ci-devant* governess, speaking aloud, as it were, to herself, and turning round to her patroness with an easy air—"Well, the matter's done now, and that little brat will never trouble us again, I hope. Of course, when it grows up, and you are the Countess of Broad-acres, you will do what is considered the handsome thing for it, and the world will applaud you. Ah me! what shadows we are, and what shadows we pursue! That is not an original observation, Amethyst: it is merely a quotation, and must be taken as such. What puzzles me, my dear, is this, that just after committing a crime we feel so moral. You have read, doubtless, Shakspeare's play of 'Macbeth'? Don't you perceive—the scene, you remember, is laid in your own beautiful country, and Scots study what is written about Scotland—don't you perceive that, just after the noble Thane has cut his guest's throat, he bursts out into enough moral reflections to fill a copy-book; and, as any person must see, if he had only

acted upon one of those reflections, he would never have done the deed, and never have been King of Scotland or immortalized by the grand Shakspeare?"

"You torture me," said Amethyst, suddenly. "What are you going to do with that?"

She pointed to the handful of ashes which Miss Nightley held in her large white and shapely hand, tightly enough clenched.

"Clean my teeth with them," said the companion, with a laugh. "Don't you be alarmed: no one shall find any trace of our little deed, nor does any one know of your complicity with me. I am the only actor here."

"But your agent, he must know, I am certain. Are you sure of him?"

"*Bien sure!*" said Nightley, tossing up her red mane with something like a triumph. "I have taken the measure of that man's foot: rest and be at peace."

"I cannot," cried Lady Amethyst, suddenly. "I will go to my husband and tell him what I have done. I can bear this no longer, nor will I do so."

The lady walked about her room in some indignation; for, although she longed to be in the position she was in, she did not like the prospect when she was in it. Thus little boys at school show immense courage in climbing a tree, and, having reached nearly the topmost branch, are terrified as they glance downwards and find that to return is more difficult, if more desirable, than to go on.

“*Hé, bien !*” said Miss Nightley, elevating her white eyebrows; “*qu’en prétendez-vous faire ?* Go to your husband ! go to Andrew Bradstock ! Well, go at once ; trot off and about your business ; and what will he do ? Why, he will simply applaud everything I have done. I say *I* have done ; for, if you are too timid, I will take it all upon myself. You reap the reward, I only the danger. Well and good : how do you like the arrangement ? I have made quite sure of Andrew : all that you have to do is to keep quite still and hold your peace. Dear me ! have we not sufficient heart to crown ourselves with a coronet ? Did not that big Napoleon, big in ambition and little in size, snatch

his crown out of the Pope's trembling hands and stick it on his head himself?"

Miss Nightley, as she said this, assumed the forward strut of the imperial pupil of Talma, and turned round with a triumphant look to Lady Amethyst.

But that woman of business was full of fears. *Mais quoi faire?* She could not go back, and so she resigned herself to her friend with a long sigh, saying to her, "Crowned by himself! Alas! how long did the crown rest on his unhappy head?"

CHAPTER V.

PROSPECTIVE.

"THE vera best thing that I can say of the auld deevil," said a good Scotsman one day to his friend, when they were descanting on that gentleman's doings, "is, that he never by any chance keeps his promises."

"Sure that's the worst," answered the gentleman addressed. "What can be said worse of any man of honour, now, between us?"

"Ay, man of honour!" returned the Scot; "that's good, now. But th' auld deevil is not a man of honour, and therefore it's no' so bad—d'ye see?—of him that he deceives us. And, as I said before, it is the vera best thing he could do."

What would you say if he did not, now? Don't ye see that all the world would be full of wickedness and misery? and, indeed, although it's got enough in it, it is not quite that, after all. And why so? Because the deevil does not keep his promises. No, sir"—here the Scot, who was deeply religious and quite anti-materialist, brought his fist down with a thump upon the table, and reiterated his words—"No, sir; not one. He will always dodge ye. He is a cheat, sir—a perfect swindler: he will cheat ye out of the smallest portion of profit; he will eat the kernel and throw you the shell."

It is to be supposed that our good Scotsman had, some long time before, dealings with the exalted personage of whom he spoke, since he was so thoroughly acquainted with his doings; for he certainly told the truth: the devil never does, nor ever did, keep his promises; and, of the long line of knaves which is perpetually marching in procession down the world, each member finds himself in turn a fool.

Lady Amethyst had to confess this bitter truth

in a very short time. The clever Miss Nightley availed her very little; for she had reckoned without her host, and a recent Act of Parliament rendered her cunning of no avail. The honest lawyer, when he a second time sent his clerk about the matter, had no difficulty in the world in finding the registration, nor the slightest hesitation in pronouncing it to be valid. He did not even trouble himself about comparing it with the original, and sent it down to Doctor Sangrado, enclosed in a humorous letter, in which he begged him to give his fees to the poorest person in Bilscombe.

Armed with this document, which, indeed, was now needless, since Lord Broadacres had been quite conciliated by the sweetness and quietness of his grandson, Dr. Morton again proceeded to have an interview with the old nobleman, and laid the copy of the marriage certificate, duly attested, before him. That nobleman gladly perused it, and sent for a solicitor, who, at a glance, saw that the document was genuine and *en règle*, and Lady Amethyst's little plot fell to the ground like a

castle built of cards. The devil had only allowed her three days to enjoy the dreadful idea of being a very wicked woman—a sort of *Lady Macbeth*, but more successful than that lady. Lord Broadacres called her down, and, in the presence of Dr. Morton and the lawyer, gave her the certificate to examine, and told her that the baby in safe keeping at Morton's house was heir to the estates and domain about them.

With a blank stare of astonishment, Lady Amethyst took the document, and a glance at once told her that it was a genuine copy of the original which Miss Nightley had destroyed. If the woman of business had not had a particularly strong mind, it is very doubtful whether she would not have fainted; but this strong mind came to her aid, and the only effect upon her was to turn very pale and speak like one in a dream.

"Your lordship," she said, "is now quite satisfied as to the truth of Dr. Morton's assertions?"

"Of course, Amethyst," said his lordship, good-naturedly, betraying by his way of speaking that he was, indeed, not only perfectly satisfied, but

perfectly rejoiced. "How can we be else than satisfied? If we were not so, it would be of no use. Here is a paper which has the strength of an Act of Parliament. It is of no use disputing it; is it, Mr. Smith?" His lordship spoke to the country solicitor as he turned towards him.

"Not of the slightest. The infant, by his next friend, could do anything required with this document. It has the whole weight and value of the original."

"Then we need go no further, I am sure. Sit down, Doctor, and Mr. Smith, and we will drink a glass of Madeira to his young lordship's health. How is the boy to-day, Doctor? Finely, I dare say. That is a very intelligent young woman you have to nurse him."

Poor Emmy, and poor Lady Amethyst! Here was the first entirely forgotten, as if she had never existed, and the ambition of the second set aside by a bit of "cruddled milk," as Bosola has it in the "*Dutchesse of Malfy*." The nurse, it is true, came in for a good word from his lordship; for was she not necessary for the welfare of young Lord

Somers? But as for the mother, who had given him the grandson he so much prized, Lord Broadacres did not give a thought upon her, and, had her image occurred, would have banished it in good earnest, and have taken to some more pleasant subject. Lady Amethyst suffered also in this neglect. Lord Broadacres was never very fond of her, and it was not likely that he should enter into her feelings with regard to the little disappointment she had sustained.

"You have no more need for me, your lordship," said Amethyst, with that deep respect she always showed to her father-in-law before strangers. "I can, of course, leave you now?"

"Certainly," said the nobleman, rising, and opening the door with a gallant bow. He seemed at least ten years younger, and was quite jovial and merry, as different from the broken old man whom the doctor had seen in the Palladian parlour as well could be. "You will," he continued, "take care to tell Andrew about this. It is not worth while showing him the paper: he cares a great deal more about the pedigree of a horse than

a certificate of marriage. Good morning. Oh, here is the butler."

As that portly gentleman came in, looking a nobleman himself—for servants often attain the grand or meek, religious or "fast" look of their employers—he saw at once that there was joy in the room, and, like a good servant, he at once adapted his face to the occasion.

"Here, Phillipps," said his lordship, "it is a rather unusual thing in our house to have the best wine in the morning, but we now really want a glass of something especial. You know the Madeira with the chocolate seal?" As Phillipps had perhaps drunk more of that precious liquid than his lordship, of course he nodded his head. "Well, bring me a bottle; you need not decant it; and no glasses—d'ye hear?—the little silver pannikins. I've a fancy, Dr. Morton, that wine tastes best out of silver."

"Some wines undoubtedly do," said Keith, whose mind, poor fellow, was not nearly so much at ease as was his lordship's. "Madeira is one, Tent another, and Burgundy, I think, a third;

but what puzzles me——” Here the doctor recalled to his mind that the observation he was about to make was totally disconnected with the subject in hand, and so pulled up shortly and said nothing.

“Well,” said the Earl, good-naturedly, like a country gentleman, as he was, after pausing and watching the face of Dr. Morton for some time——“Well, and what is it that puzzles you so amazingly? It seems to have landed you in a dry desert of bewilderment. Is it the chemical affinity existing between the wines and the metal? or what is it?”

Sangrado was constrained to blush and stammer a little. “What I was about to say, my lord,” said he, after a pause, “was, that I am completely at a loss to conceive what has become of poor Lady Somers. How she could have escaped from my house without leaving a trace of herself is, to me, astonishing!”

A shade passed over Lord Broadacres’s handsome face. “We will institute a search,” said he. “Mr. Smith, I dare say, will kindly interest himself. I am inclined to think that the poor lady

has made her way to London, and there remains, perhaps in the custody of some of her friends. I suppose she was a little touched in the head, poor thing." And, as he said it, the Earl carried the forefinger of his left hand to the centre of his aristocratic forehead, and tapped it slightly.

"Yes, yes!" said Morton, with a quaint, sad smile. "She was always, in my opinion," he said to himself, "more touched in the head than the heart. She would have nothing to do with me, poor thing; and no doubt she was right. We bring up women with tenderness, consideration, and fondness, and then we blame them if they want judgment, and are tender and fond." There was one, however, who did not blame them, but loved and worshipped them even for their tenderness and due want of knowledge—with him their ignorance was innocence—and as he looked over the park, which was bright in the morning sun, which threw long shadows from the trees, the honest doctor's eyes filled with tears, as he thought of the poor perplexed wanderer, who, without fixed purpose, and with no one to help and guide her, was

now, he thought, flitting hither and thither in the dark and sunless streets of mighty London.

"Dreaming again, Doctor!" cried his host. "Here comes the Madeira. Now just put some of your sad thoughts, or deep thoughts, or business thoughts, away for an instant, and give your mind to this wine: it is worth it."

Our friend John Thomas brought in a silver tray, with a cloth white as the snow, delicately turned over at the corners, and concealing the most shapely of country loaves, the most rich of Stilton cheeses, and the freshest of butter. After him came the butler with the precious bottle in his hand, it being a great deal too valuable to be intrusted to John Thomas. In the other hand, held nattily by the stems, were three antique silver cups—if it were not for the Irishism, one would call them glasses—somewhat in the shape of little pails mounted upon a stem. They were delicately thin and beautifully polished, and the butler set them down with dignity before his lordship, as John Thomas flipped the corners of the cloth into proper order, and then, at a sign from the butler,

withdrew. Phillipps, the butler, carefully dusted the cork, and even more carefully, with a persuasion which had much of the steel-hand-in-a-velvet-glove manner about it, drew it. Then he exhibited the cork to his lordship, who inspected it with interest, and finally, with ease combined with dignity, the butler poured out the wine, which, as it gurgled voluptuously out of the bottle, filled the room with a delicate flavour.

The country attorney opened his nostrils to the grateful perfume, as a lazy Grecian god might have done to the ascending steam of the sacrifices. "Hallo!" said the man of law, "that is indeed something great, Dr. Morton." He knew his place too well to address his patron. "I expect you and I, now, have never tasted such wine as this in our lives. I really expect we have not; I do, indeed." Gratefully, too, did he move his nose over the little silver cup, as he waited for his lordship's toast.

"You may go, Phillipps," said Lord Broadacrea. "I will attend to these gentlemen and the wine; or, rather, we can attend to ourselves."

Phillipps set down the old bottle, a thin-necked, big-bodied thing, which looked especially antique; with so paternal a care that there could not have been given the slightest motion to the deep-coloured gold liquid within, and then noiselessly withdrew.

Sangrado and the lawyer sat in attention and very silently, and, with some emotion, Lord Broadacres proposed the health of the son and heir of his dear boy, the inheritor of the title and the splendid fortune.

All three drank it in silence; and of the three, two cared little for the wine, and much for the toast; not so, however, the solicitor, who was loud in the praise of the Madeira.

"My lord," said he, with an unctuous but quiet smack, made by suddenly withdrawing his tongue from the top of his palate, "this *is* Madeira; magnificent, beautiful, splendid!" And the worthy lawyer looked as if he could have gone on for half the day adding ill-chosen epithet to epithet in praising and commending the "real East India Madeira," which was, in Mr. Phillipps's opinion, the

pride of his lordship's cellars and the true glory of the county.

Dr. Morton, not altogether insensible to the charms of a glass of rare wine, said something very quietly, and very properly marking his connoisseurship, but not falling into any of those ecstasies which, in the opinion of a teetotaller, would have been disgusting and almost profane. He thought, poor fellow, that he should like to have prescribed a glass of such old wine every morning at eleven, with perhaps the breast of a partridge, to that dear invalid the remembrance of whom never left him, and then he sat silent. On the Earl the good old wine had a brilliant effect: he had been cheerful before, but he now became almost joyous. He mentioned his lost son with composure, talked of the "monstrously fine" baby he had left, and wished to have him at once placed at the Abbey. But this Dr. Morton would not listen to. He had, he said, received from Emmy that child as a "sacred charge," and he claimed to have the custody of it till the lady returned. She, of course, must be consulted about it. In short, Dr. Morton treated

Lady Somers with a reverence which pleased and at the same time touched his lordship.

"You are a good fellow, Morton," said he, pouring out a third glass of the excellent Madeira; "and of course your wishes, as well as those of my son's widow, must be consulted. Pray drink: there's not a headache in a hogshead of it."

"'Tis a pity to leave any, indeed, my lord," said the solicitor, with a smile, holding his wine-glass delicately by the foot, as men do when they critically taste and appraise wine. "Of course the wishes of Lady Somers must be obeyed; and you could not do better than leave his young lordship where he is, and appoint Dr. Morton physician-in-ordinary in attendance on him." The meek gentleman laughed at the little joke, and then took an opportunity of concealing his snigger by again applying to the Madeira, every fresh sip of which seemed to please him more than the last.

His remark was not lost on Lord Broadacres, who, in the height of his good-nature, made a note of it, and determined to make an adequate addition to our doctor's income. He considered, he said,

that perhaps for some months, or even for the first two or three years, Cold Blow, seated on a hill, would be of more benefit to the baby than the Abbey lying in a valley, and that, on the whole, it would be more cheerful than their dull stone house, with no woman in it less stately than Lady Amethyst or Miss Nightley; but, in the spring and summer mornings, he, Lord Bradstock, could ride across and view the dear little thing; nay, his servants and nurses could take him out in the park and on alternate days to the Abbey. When he was old enough the child should have a pony.

The old man's eyes brightened as he gazed on the future and drank his old wine; the doctor's saddened as he thought of one so soon set aside, absent, useless, and forgotten.

CHAPTER VI.

STANNARD "CROSSES OVER."

WITHOUT any compunction at having kept from an innocent lady that which might have righted her, since he hardly stooped to inquire about the matter, Mr. Herbert Stannard, as soon as he pocketed the money, very nearly forgot his obligation to the old companion who put the "job" in his way. There may be honour among thieves—a point which the police, however, are very ready to question—but there is and can be very little honour with those loosely-educated persons who acknowledge success and position to be the all-in-all in life; and of this sort Stannard was one. He had made a great man's maxims his political as well as moral

study, and he acted upon them "according to his own lights," as he said; and it must be owned those lights generally reflected on his own side only.

Whether he understood Jeremy Bentham as the great Bentham intended he should be understood, may be a question; but he understood him as many other persons understand social axioms and moral laws, only so far as they served his own purpose. He did not know enough of law to see he had, in slang terms, merely "sold" Miss Nightley "a bargain": had he done so, he would have chuckled to himself over the matter. And it is to be noted that, although Pegwell Bay had not as yet reaped one halfpenny by the transaction, still Stannard persisted in thinking him the lucky man, and himself, with the hundred pounds yet almost untouched in his pocket, as the unlucky one.

"To think that by a mere accident that old boy should have stumbled on that purse! What a lucky old beggar it is! Well, well, I suppose it will never come to my turn. Here I've been

waiting and waiting any time, and I never found a marriage certificate worth a hundred pounds.

“Worth a hundred pounds, eh! I dare say it was worth a thousand. What a fool I was to close at the first offer! Why, if I had have led her on, I do not know what might have been the result. But there, that comes of dealing with underlings. Those whom I want to go to are the principals. Yes, the principals, they are the people for my money. Ah, I ought to have got five hundred at least. If I had have found it, and it had have been mine, really I would have dealt with it differently.”

So that, after all, there was the shred of honesty in the selfish young man; and, while he was hurrying away from Pegwell with his money—or, rather, the results of his find—in his pocket, he indirectly owned that he had scarcely a comfortable possession. Similarly he comforted his conscience, and, as it were, mesmerized it, by assuring himself that Pegwell would have given it up for nothing, or at most would have made ten pounds by it, which

sum he determined to forward to an address agreed upon when he arrived at Liverpool.

To that busy town he made the best of his way; and, packing up carefully between cards the halves of three five-pound notes, he sent them from one post-office in one letter, and the other halves he despatched from another. When that little matter was arranged, he sat down to a light dinner with a better conscience, and treated himself to an extra pint of some tawny port which the wine *carte* described as "light and elegant."

"The old beggar will not smell a rat, I should think," said he to himself: "I've only put in the fly of the wrapper, 'All right—off to join the Warlock.' I think he never will tumble to it. Besides, if he did, the money was mine: he would never have dealt with it as I did." Which was indeed a very probable truth, the old gentleman certainly having intended the document to fall into the hands of rightful owners.

The mind of the erratic young gentleman soon tired of one subject, especially if that subject were an unpleasant one, and he went off like a butterfly

to another, which was none other than the "light and elegant" old tawny wine just mentioned.

"'Pon my word, it isn't bad," said he to himself. "Let me see; what is that which Bentham says, or at any rate John Bowring for him, in his 'Deontology'? I think it must be Bentham's own, it's so acute. 'Every pleasure is a *primâ facie* good, and ought to be pursued;' *ergo*, I am all right: this is a pleasure, and this is good; so I'll have another pint with my dinner. It's a bad plan and rather vulgar to drink port *seul*, but it don't matter in this town."

Our philosopher had a great contempt for "provincial towns," as they are called, although we have no provinces; but probably the inventors of that title made it on purpose to distinguish the large country towns from the ancient capitals of counties. To Stannard, London, with all its fogs of pea-soup, its mud, blacks, and dirt, its ugly streets and ill-conditioned old houses, its smoke and want of fresh air, was all in all. He loved the old place with the true Bohemian affection; and one great pang—perhaps the only one he felt

—was caused by the consciousness that he must leave the old haunt and repair to “pastures new” for a time, until he felt that he could with a good grace face his wife and his deceived friend Pegwell. For he had a great belief in himself, and, in spite of Safta’s acts and declarations, still dreamed that his presence would be pleasant to that misguided and ambitious woman.

“Let me see,” said he to himself, as he helped himself to the cutlets and *sauce piquante* he had ordered; “America is the place for me: once there, I shall soon come back with money; and then won’t she look at me! I can pay old Pegwell, then, the money I have borrowed, and go along like a fire-engine. What is Bentham’s next proposition? ‘Every act whereby pleasure is reaped is, all consequences apart, good.’ Ah! that clause always puzzled me. It stands in the way like a stumbling-block. I think Jeremy was a profound philosopher: what a great deal he has said in a few words!”

Here his thoughts were interrupted by a voice which said, in a curious nasal whine, which, if not

perfectly Yankee, goes very far and wide as an imitation of it.

"I calculate, mister, them chops o' yourn are cooked to *a* turn."

The voice accentuated the *a*, and, indeed, almost every penultimate syllable, except when it laid the stress on the ultimate, and sang, rather than spoke, the sentence.

Much as Stannard disliked any interference, he knew too much of the Yankee constitution of Liverpool to resent it. He reasoned within himself, "If I am to begin at all, I may as well begin now; so here goes. Stranger," said he, with a good nasal imitation, "I guess these chops air good."

"Then," said the other, "I conclude that I can't do better than follow your lead. Here, boy, just bring me ditto to this gentleman."

He sat down at the opposite side of the table to Stannard, and, taking up his knife and fork, began to play with them. He was a handsome, intelligent-looking man, with a high forehead, but a weak mouth and chin. He had sharp, quick eyes, which

in repose were beautiful enough ; but they never were in repose. He was dressed in black cloth, with well-made Parisian coat and trousers, and would have been an elegant figure if Nature had not been sparing of her padding. He gave people an idea that, on the whole, there was a great deal too much knee and elbow about him ; and his feet were, moreover, large, and set down by far too flat on the ground.

"I reckon," said this gentleman to Stannard, with an accent purposely Yankee, at least so Stannard afterwards found out, "that you'll be goin' across."

"Maybe," said our old friend, eyeing his *vis-à-vis* with curiosity : "I haven't made up my mind yet."

"There can't be two questions about that to one who is young and *active*," said the stranger. "Now, I dare say you want to make your way in the world?"

"Really, the want is so universal"—here the stranger balanced the silver fork cleverly on the end of the knife, and twisted it round and round—"that it needs no ghost to tell us that."

"No ghost! wa'll, that's a curious way of putting it, stranger," answered his companion. "I don't believe in ghosts myself; you do. It's a matter of taste, I take it. What I've got to say is this, and no more: the man that wants to get on ahead in life, which I reckon is what most on us wants to do, had better leave this exhausted old country and make tracks for the new."

If the stranger had missed the common citation from "Hamlet," he had not missed taking a pretty accurate measure of that which was passing in Stannard's mind. That individual had long ago settled in his mind that England was indeed an exhausted country, and that men of spirit and enterprise must seek elsewhere for a fit and proper recognition of their talents. Their own native countries do, somehow, get very soon worn out, in the eyes of impatient and enterprising spirits; a result which is, perhaps, not more than we should expect from such ardent souls. If Stannard, in his new clothes, new position, and elegant exterior, felt, at first, that the stranger was taking an unwarrantable liberty in addressing him, he no longer felt so, and

set himself to listen to one who had seen many cities and men.

The American gentleman, on his part, seemed to have fixed himself to the table whereat our adventurer was with a determination. He drew one chair near to his own and threw up his legs on the back of it whilst he waited for the cutlets; and the waiter having served him, he poured out a quantity of melted butter over his potatoes, mixed it all up with the *sauce piquante*, stuck his knife boldly into the salt-cellar without troubling himself about a salt-ladle, and set himself to work with an eagerness and energy that amused and astonished his more sensitive and delicate companion. In a few minutes, during which Stannard had kept silence, the operation was finished, and the gentleman, satisfied and full, pushed away his plate, and, leaning on his elbows, addressed Stannard.

“You see that it don’t take me very long to load: I fill up very shortly, I do; yes, considerable, I think, sir. Quick at work, quick at meat, that’s my motter. What’s your——” Stannard

thought he was going to ask him what his "mutter" was; but he turned it off into "What's your p'ison?" at which the Englishman looked puzzled, till his friend explained to him that thereby he intended to ask him what it was that he intended to drink.

"Well," said Stannard, "this is what I am about;" and he held up the half-finished pint of the light and elegant old tawny before referred to.

"Rum?" asked his companion.

"Not at all," returned the Englishman. "I found it very good indeed. Perhaps you are not fond of port wine?"

"No, thank you, sir," answered his new friend, with an especial inflection on the *sir*. "I would rather not. If you want to take alcohol, take it in its purest way: give me good West Indy rum or French brandy. Perhaps you don't mind liquoring up with me?"

As Stannard had not the slightest objection, and moreover saw, or fancied that he saw, something in the American which might be useful to him, the two gentlemen agreed to "liquor up"

together, and removed to the smoking-room to enjoy the recreation of a cigar during the festive employment which went by the name. When he had taken about a dozen whiffs of his "weed," and had imbibed some little portion of the contents of his tumbler, the New Yorker dropped a great deal of his nasal twang, and became very communicative. He was in want of somebody to act for him as treasurer in some theatrical speculations. He did not wholly like his own countrymen: the honest men were so slow, and the quick ones knew too much for him. He had dealt with many of them before, and had been "swindled some;" in fact, a great deal. He desired "to recuperate, he did;" and he had got one or two extraordinarily talented people from Eu-rope: a Swiss who performed on a pipe; an Englishman, with an Italian name, who rode upon many steeds at once; an Irishman, *pur sang*, born at Glasgow, who could tie up his body into the form of a porter's knot, and would then suffer himself to be thrown from one side of the stage to another; and a young Scotch lady who first saw light in Mexico, and of

a Spanish mother, who could descend on a slack rope at a height of eighty feet whilst delicately employed in wheeling a barrowful of fireworks. With these the American hoped to draw extraordinary houses, and to pocket enough during the term of their engagement to start something on a prodigiously grand scale. For the gentleman, after making his money, did not intend to rest: no; he was too go-ahead to keep quiet, and too ambitious of making a huge fortune.

Perhaps if Chance had been especially engaged in finding out an employment for Stannard, it could not have done better. In a very few moments he consented to "cross over the water" with the American, and to his astonishment proved that he was perfectly familiar with the employment proposed for him in the future.

"Why," said the New Yorker, "seeing you at first, sitting there so solitary-like, I took you for an *Aristocrat*, a purse-proud, land-proud, birth-proud *Aristocrat*, I can assure you. But things are so uncommon out o' sorts in this old land. Then I took you for a musical composer; but I

certainly did not give you the credit of being of my own order. Well, so much the better : I dare say we can make things pretty pleasant. There's a great art in making things pleasant, I can tell you."

It seemed very probable to Stannard that his new companion possessed that art "in an eminent degree," as the newspapers say; for in less than half an hour he found that he had finished his cigar, his pint of "light and elegant," and had imparted to his companion the facts of his birth, his unhappy marriage, and the great talent of his wife, and had, moreover, agreed to go over to New York, and to manage the happy family over which the American *entrepreneur* presided.

"I wish I had only time," said he, "to run up to London and bring back my wife with me. She'd make a *furore* in New York, sir; that she would."

"Has she made a sensation—that's what we call it," said his friend—"in London yet?"

Stannard was obliged to confess that she had not.

"Well, then," returned the *entrepreneur*, "you'd better not take her over. It won't be pleasant, it won't. You'd expect too much, and get nothin'. Our people like to hear big guns : when they are quite sure that all you Englishmen run after a favourite, then they'll run too ; and pretty smart they will run, to be sure."

There was not only good sense, but a great deal of decision about his new friend's words, and Stannard felt that he could not do better than take them as final. So the unhappy young fellow, letting *I dare not* wait upon *I would*, too weak to be honest, too fond to be bold, clever only when cleverly directed, linked his fortunes with a perfect stranger, and sailed to that new world whereat so many have hoped to gain so much, and have gained so little.

CHAPTER VII.

A RETREAT.

A GREAT grief is what very few men and women are able to bear; although most of us vapour a good deal, and assert that we are heroes when the struggle comes, and wish that it would come and be over at once. But when a really great and crushing grief does come, like the twenty-first wave over a labouring ship, the trouble and the sufferer generally disappear together. Lady Somers had led a happy life during childhood, but her early youth was not very pleasing to one who was young, not very thoughtful or industrious, and ambitious. When the dream of her young love first dawned—if one may use the word—upon

her, she welcomed it with all the fervour of her existence, although she had very serious doubts of its ever turning out happily. She was quite prepared to be crossed in love. Had Lord Somers only flirted with her, or had he merely engaged her affections and simply told her, as some men will coolly, but with romantic phrases, tell women, that he loved her, but dared not marry her, she would have heard him with an abundance of love and tears, have conjured him to sacrifice her rather than displease his father and offend his family, and would have been quite ready for the *coup de grâce* which she imagined he would have given with all the tenderness and grace of the hero in a romantic opera.


She had rehearsed—perhaps more than once, poor thing!—these sad scenes which never were to be. He was *Louis XIV.*, she *la Valière*. Again, changing sexes, she was that German Knight of Rolandseck who went away into the far distant East to fight against the Paynims, and came back when his lady had taken, and irretrievably taken, the veil: she was, alas! the bride

of Heaven, and the knight had nothing to do but to die. And she, Emmy, would die too when the time came, only it is so pleasant to live nursing a romantic sorrow. Did not the brave knight live for months, perhaps years, having built himself a little cell whence he could watch the convent-tower where the lady dwelt? and did he not every morning watch the lady as she opened the lattice? And did not the people of the place find him there sitting, a corpse, with his face turned to the lattice, waiting the dawning of his sun?

“Und so sass er eine Leiche
Eines Morgens da,
Nach dein Fenster noch das bleiche,
Stille Antlitz sah.”

She had wept over the story in Schiller, and she found that in her own heart she could have well followed out the prescription of the Knight of Rolandseck (he calls him Toddenburg, but Emmy did not fancy the name), and die in knowing that Felix was indeed happy.

Perhaps it is a good thing for us that these



romantic ideas of ours—and we all have them in our youth ; even “our Mr. Naylor” had a faint glimmer of something purer than blue foolscap and whiter than parchment—that these romantic ideas never turn out as we imagine they will. The man who makes himself famous, or who builds a colossal fortune, I believe never does it just as he wanted. Does not Mr. Mechi want to make his money by farming ? and does not the world know a member of the Stock Exchange, a hard hand at figures, who, instead of being on the committee of the Stock Exchange, would feel his ambition more gratified by taking upon himself the editorship of a cheap weekly periodical ? Riches and happy chance may come and do come to many of us ; but then they are not acquired when we most want them, and the happy chance is of a totally different character to the one we long for.

It would be too much to say that Miss Everingham was disappointed when Lord Somers made her his wife ; but she was infinitely astonished and overwhelmed by his lordship’s goodness. Up to that point she had been prepared for any disap-

pointment; after it she believed that she had found the haven and resting-place, that Fortune had done her worst as well as her best, and that for the future the world was to be a paradise. How bitterly she was awakened from this dream one need not say. The twenty-first wave came, and came not in a storm, but in the midst of a calm, and she was engulfed.

Happy indeed was she to be found, at the most critical moment of her life, by Father Gargle, who, pitying her condition, had her quietly removed, and placed under the care of the Superior of the Retreat which had been established not far from the church of the Piscatorians.

The Retreat, which was the most mysterious place near Bilscombe Regis, had a history of its own which was singular. There are histories in buildings as well as in men's lives, and houses no less than people are afflicted with good and bad luck. The Retreat had this peculiarity, that it was unlike any other house. An eccentric gentleman, who retired from London and the parks many years before the story, built himself a large house which he

called the "Hermitage;" and rumours of his eccentricity coming down from London with him, the inhabitants of Bilscombe very eagerly flocked round the workmen to see what would come of "Staines's Folly," as they already named it. This, coming to the ears of the proprietor, made him surround the three or four acres on which the Hermitage or Folly stood with a high wall, which nearly shut out Staines and his Folly too from the Bilscombe public.

The poor man went to a good deal of unnecessary expense. The Folly was a nine days' wonder; and when the nine days were passed the Bilscombiens left the builder and the house equally alone. The rich people would not call upon Mr. Staines, and the poor people did not admire him. The eccentric old man had his servants from London, and the Bilscombe people did not like them. Strange rumours went about the town concerning the house; even the tradespeople did not care to serve the housekeeper; and the ugly high walls, the gaunt, dark, large house, were left untenanted for a long time after the misanthrope

died, and would have fallen to ruin or have been knocked down and rebuilt, had not some ladies of Father Gargle's way of thinking found the house, and immediately secured it as a Retreat.

To this Retreat Father Gargle had *entré* as director, and to it he sent Emmy. A man of religion was the Piscatorian, no doubt; but he was happily, too, a man of the world, and the first few sentences from the young lady's lips convinced him that she had better stay where she was.

She told him, with many tears, her story; and her position he very well comprehended; but she was too ill to be suffered to proceed to London on her wild errand, which was somehow by local memory to find out where she had been married, and there get a copy of the certificate she had lost. After that she had no direct plan; and it is probable that, had she accomplished her design, she would have found her strength decay, and, with her purpose fulfilled, her life would have finished.

The Father of the Piscatorians had, as we know, a persuasive manner with him; and he could assume, moreover, when he liked, a stern, yet sweet

superiority, which made him cherished and esteemed by all those who wanted guidance and direction. Moreover, he knew womankind pretty well; and after Lady Somers had remained quietly a week in the Retreat, and hinted, although she was ill, and even confined to her bed in old Mr. Staines's drawing-room, which had been turned into an infirmary, that she wished to proceed on her mission, he at once forbade her.

"My dear daughter," said he, "you will stay here, if you please, for many, many days to come. The sisters all tell me how ill and weak you are; moreover, everything you want to do has been done. Lord Bradstock acknowledges your marriage; Lady Amethyst acquiesces, as, indeed, she can only do; and——"

"Let me fly to her," said Emmy: "she will welcome me as a sister. I never had a sister—until now;" then she burst into tears, and wept bitterly.

The priest, good as he was calm, waited till the tears were over, and then told the lady that to go to her sister-in-law would be very foolish on her

part. "I happen to know," said he, "that Lady Amethyst looks upon you with very little favour. You are, in her eyes, an interloper. I have heard of many crimes being committed for place and power; people are generally very unwilling to give them up; and it is quite a mistake to suppose, as you Protestants do, that all the crimes in the world are limited to the crowned heads of kings and the tonsured skulls of priests. We in England play our little games too. It is to the interest of Lady Amethyst that you should die, and your child quietly disappear; and although I am sure she would be the last to confess herself capable of removing you, still it is better as it is—that you should remain in obscurity, in a haven of peace."

The fact is, Miss Nightley, when pitched against the priest, was a mere nothing. Clever to a certain extent, that lady was eager to do her work, and pleased with the idea that she pulled the strings of many puppets; but the father had gone long beyond her. People who are acquainted with the wickedness of the human heart very often jump

to conclusions which do not seem at all complimentary to humanity, and which quite shock ears accustomed to polite and dulcet sounds, but which are, nevertheless, true.

“And my child, father—what shall I do with my child? Who will take care of him?”

“The usual question of women,” said the father, glancing towards the Superior of the Retreat, who stood before him watchful, patient, respectful, regarding his slightest glance. “The world clings to men in the guise of use, ambition, vanity of eloquence, greatness, and power: to women it appeals merely through their affections, and drags them down to its own ways at last.”

Emmy did not have, at that time, the same respect for the eloquent Piscatorian that it may be supposed she afterwards had; for she cried out, saying, “But, sir, he is my only comfort, my joy; the one thing I love on earth; the only stay and support I have; the last thing *he* left me. You would not take him from me, would you, sir?”

The father looked first at the Lady Superior, sometimes called the Mother of the Retreat, and

them at Elmore. Her eyes were not entirely dry; although it must be confessed that the Lady Wetherburn had feelings well under control, and anxious to show the most composure while the father was there. The Squire, having bent down to the child, said to her, "I said you were a brave girl, and I am glad to see you are so." — "I am glad to hear you say so," replied the girl, "but I am not so brave as you think me."

"You are a brave girl," said the Squire, "and I am glad to see you are so. I am glad to hear you say so, but I am not so brave as you think me."

"You are a brave girl," said the Squire, "and I am glad to see you are so. I am glad to hear you say so, but I am not so brave as you think me."

"Spare him," repeated the priest with a winning smile. "It is not in my power to hurt the child, and it is in my power to do him good. All the town is anxious at your escape and flight. No one knows where you have gone to; many

rise to put up pure prayers to the Maker, Ruler, and Supporter of us all!"

Emmy's brain wandered a little during this digression, and she looked inquiringly at Father Gargle, as much as to say, "Now, dear, good sir, pray go on and talk about my baby. What of him?"

"A providence, you may depend, madam, directed your steps here. I have since learned what has happened. The Earl of Broadacres has at once acknowledged your claim, and has opened his heart to the child; but he has done very wisely in letting him remain in the custody of the good doctor, who, indeed, refused to give him up. By that means the safety of the child during his tender years will be guaranteed. He will, no doubt, increase in favour and in health. It is, probably, a very sad thing to tell you, as a mother, but it is a fact: your presence is not needed; the baby is quite as well—indeed, to tell the whole truth, is a great deal better—without you. Providence has found it a home in the heart and house of that good doctor."

then at Emmy. His eyes were not entirely dry; although it must be confessed that the Lady Mother kept her feelings well under control, and scorned to show the least sensibility while the priest was there. Then Father Gargle bent down to the young lady, and said, softly, "Would you like to lose your boy—to have him taken from you?"

"Oh no! no! no!" cried Emmy, as if in agony at the thought. "Anything rather than that. Spare him! he must live to fill his father's place."

She had a way of talking to the most recent friends with the greatest confidence. She threw herself upon the protection of the good priest, who had succoured her, with all the trust which she had. She could not imagine that any one would hurt or harm her, because she knew that she could not hurt or harm anybody.

"Spare him!" repeated the priest, with a winning smile: "it is not in my power to hurt the child, and it is in my power to do him good. All the town is surprised at your escape and flight. No one knows where you have gone to; many

suppose that you are dead. This saves me and you a great deal of trouble; because the belief or supposition that you have committed suicide is so prevalent, that those who are asked to search for you perform their office very loosely."

Emmy, lying on her little pallet, shuddered. Many thought her dead; and so she might be, indeed, dead, and lying with the dead, but for one object, and that object her own child.

"For some good purpose, God directed your steps to my door, to the door of his house, wherein his praise rose in the early morning: whilst others were sleeping, we forgot not to awake right early."

There was a little spice of that dangerous sin spiritual pride in the good priest. Which of us who had given up as much as he had would be entirely without it?

"Yes, sister," he said, turning to the third person present; "how many in this England arise every morning with but one object—one worldly object—the gain of money! How many thousands rise but to spend the day in pleasure, in sinful gratification! How many amongst us

rise to put up pure prayers to the Maker, Ruler, and Supporter of us all?"

Emmy's brain wandered a little during this digression, and she looked inquiringly at Father Gargle, as much as to say, "Now, dear, good sir, pray go on and talk about my baby. What of him?"

"A providence, you may depend, madam, directed your steps here. I have since learned what has happened. The Earl of Broadacres has at once acknowledged your claim, and has opened his heart to the child; but he has done very wisely in letting him remain in the custody of the good doctor, who, indeed, refused to give him up. By that means the safety of the child during his tender years will be guaranteed. He will, no doubt, increase in favour and in health. It is, probably, a very sad thing to tell you, as a mother, but it is a fact: your presence is not needed; the baby is quite as well—indeed, to tell the whole truth, is a great deal better—without you. Providence has found it a home in the heart and house of that good doctor."

“That good doctor!” thought Emmy, indignantly. “He take my child away! He supplant me in his love!” She did not feel in the least grateful to him, but, on the contrary, very sharp and spiteful, and really to regard him as a mean supplanter and pretender, who had not the slightest right with her baby. But yet the plain sense of her adviser sunk deeply into her heart, and she pondered on what he said.

“That good doctor,” said Father Gargle, turning again to the other lady present, “is an ornament to the neighbourhood. Ah, what a good man that man is! Everybody speaks well of him. I come upon traces of his goodness in every cottage. I find that he has relieved this poor creature, and not only physicked, but fed, that poor family. If he were only of the true faith, sister, of what service would he be to us! No, madam,” he continued, turning to Emmy; “he must not be taken away (the child, not the doctor): leave him with him for some time.”

“And what shall I do meanwhile?” said the patient, troubled mother, with tears rising in her

eyes, out of pity for her own helplessness. "Who will care for me?"

"We will, my daughter," said the Lady Superior, softly. "You can remain here for ever, if you choose, in quietude, happiness, and peace. God will care for you."

"Yes, indeed," said Father Gargle; "if the world only knew what happiness there is in quietude and retirement, and how little happiness there is in the continued bustle which produces no peace and merely useless riches, there would be many more in this busy land who would hasten to join us. Sister, you have said well. God does indeed care for those whom the world casts out and rejects. Let us leave the lady to reflect upon her best plan: we are ready to aid her in any."

"Pray don't go," said poor Lady Somers, feeling more hopeless and bewildered, and at the same time feeling that the kindness of the good father was sinking deeply into her heart. "Let me reflect a little."

But the more she reflected the more troubled

she grew. Emmy had been brought up during a portion of her life in a strongly Protestant family ; a family, that is, which distinguished itself by protesting very energetically against a form of faith of which it knew little, and against priests and professors about whom it knew nothing. Hence the young lady's timidity when she found she had fallen into the hands of these professors was considerable ; but, when she found only kindness at those hands, she imagined that her ancient friends were all in the wrong, and her mind turned with a gentle feeling of repentance to the good people of whom she had formerly thought so very badly. Perhaps one of the worst ways to fight error is that which many persons are very fond of, namely, borrowing one of the devil's weapons to fight it with. Simple truth is often a very colourless and quiet matter, and does not suit the armory of the headstrong warrior who goes out to combat, and determines to let all the world know whom he is going to fight. Moreover, human kindness, the very basis of genuine religion, is the same in all creeds, and both Father Gargle

and the Superior were good, kindly people, who had felt trouble and sorrow themselves, and were never tired of comforting the sorrows of others. A very little reflection, now that her mind was more calm, made the young mother, with, however, an exquisite pang of grief at abandoning her child, see that really she would be better in the quiet retreat Providence had brought her to, than with her child in the great, gaunt, straggling Abbey, under the walls of which she had once or twice walked with her husband, and which she had looked at with a shudder when she contrasted it with the quiet little dove's nest the Woodbines.

That husband too had told her, many and many a time, how much happier and better it was for them to live unnoticed and unknown in their own little house, than in a great place like the Abbey, surrounded with ceremony and formalism, receiving people whom they did not care about and hardly knew, and being forced to undertake duties for which they were not fitted. Lord Somers was not a "county man." He could not busy himself about the useful, no doubt, but petty details of a

hunt ball, relieved with the more laborious duties of Lord-Lieutenant of the county and Chairman of Quarter Sessions. The greatness which had been thrust upon him at his birth he rather disliked than otherwise. He was ambitious, as all young men are ; but his ambition was of that generous kind which likes to win fame rather than to wear notoriety without having won it.

When Emmy remembered all this, and felt, in addition to these recollections of knowledge and feelings which she had shared, oh ! so long ago, a blank having occurred in the meantime which looked to her like the lapse of a century, that she really was unable to carry on her own business or to cope with the world represented by her new connections, she determined, with a sigh, to stay where she was.

"You go out into the world, sir," she said to Father Gargle : "you will often see my child ?"

"As often as you require me," said the priest ; and then, remembering what young mothers were, he said, more slowly, "that is, as often as it will be

requisite for the boy's good. I must not be seen near him too much ; but he is safe with that good doctor. That good man has been speaking to me about you. There is no one in the world who cares more for you than he does, or who mourns your loss so deeply. I do think that all the rest have given you up as dead, drowned, like *Ophelia* ; but he, he alone, talks of you as alive, and clings to the hope that you will come back and take the child to the Abbey in triumph ; and so some day you will."

"So some day I will," said Emmy to herself, slowly. "Alive among the dead ! unknown, unsought, uncared for, but by one ! Pshaw ! what does he care for me ? He will be well paid for his services to my lord."

Then, turning to Father Gargle, she told him that she would stay in the Retreat, at any rate for some months ; and she gave him her reticule, in which she had packed a considerable sum in bank notes, which was to be paid to the Lady Superior, on her behalf, for the trouble and expense she would occasion.

"And you," she said, looking at Father Gargle, "will see little Felix every day, and procure me, when you can, a portrait of the boy. I will stay here and pray for him. I do not love the world, and the world does not love me. I will get away from it—a wicked, angry, troublesome, wretched place. I hate it."

As she said this the young widow burst into an abundance of tears, and felt, no doubt, comforted. There was not only a wounded heart, but much wounded pride in this poor young lady; and in withdrawing from the world no doubt she thought that she made the world feel the separation somewhat. Do we not all do so? The manufacturers and employers of labour, as Mr. Bright says, are the great men—better than warriors, and much greater than kings. Kings have had their day, and manufacturers are now going in for their honours. Well, in good time it will happen that these gentlemen will get tired of business, and, if we go on as we do now, some of them perhaps will join Father Ignatius. Let us imagine the great Price, as he lays down the direction of his army of

tallow-candlemakers, and dons the frock and assumes the tonsure, saying to the world, "Adieu! I am tired of you, O World. I leave you; but you, too, will miss my shining lights." Or, it may be, the industrious Keach, who turns out so many millions of lucifers, will do the same thing, but always with an idea that it will be difficult to find his match. Ah, what a difficult thing it is to take a humble estimate of one's self! What is the use of pitting a unit against the thousand millions of units on the globe? Temper and folly make us feel conceited even when we are brought most low. Emmy went into a safe and voluntary seclusion, and thought that she perhaps had piqued and disturbed some few about her; whereas the world went on just as well as ever. Lord Bradstock was delighted with the baby, the baby was charmed with its nurse, the nurse was pleased with her importance, Lotty was head lady-in-waiting and keeper of the robes and a great favourite with the Earl, and Mrs. Lapis much more at her ease since she thereby reassumed her position in the doctor's house.

Lady Amethyst was silent and observant, and Miss Nightley puzzled but defiant. Nobody cared for Emmy. There was the usual amount of wild surmise, accepted as truth one week, and violently contradicted the next ; but at last few even thought of her, except one, and that one, we need scarcely say, was Doctor Sangrado.

CHAPTER VIII.

WHICH FOLLOWS THE FORTUNES OF VARIOUS
PERSONS IN THE STORY.

THE career of great men is, no doubt, edifying to themselves; but it is often, in fact, more brilliant to the on-lookers than to the heroes. It must be often very unpleasant to be a hero, and exceedingly so to be a rich and a great man; although those gentlemen are so perverse that they never will own the truth, or only do it upon rare and sparse occasions, and thereby instruct the world. A popular writer who has endeavoured to explode what he considers a fallacy—namely, that there is any dignity in labour—asserts that you hear rich men boasting, perhaps, that they have arisen from dustmen or carpenters, or on occasions

exhibiting the porter's knot, well preserved in a handsome glass case, which, in their early lives, they carried on their foreheads; but he urges they don't want to go back to be carpenters, or dustmen, or porters.

Cela va sans dire; but, after all, it proves nothing. They were often much more truly dignified and useful when they were porters than when they grew to be aldermen. That they are not particularly happy as aldermen, after all the hurry, bustle, and excitement of getting a fortune, is proved by their reference to the porter's knot or the dust-cart. They have gone through the game, and the only amusement they had was while they were in it. They are much more cross, uncomfortable, and discontented when rich than when poor. As long as they had an object in view they were satisfied: now the object is gained they are not so, and they try to gain a little fictitious excitement by telling their friends or constituents what both friends and constituents knew very well before, their early history. So it seems that the Roman general who, after fighting his country's battles,

returned home again to cultivate his turnips, was not such a fool as some persons take him for. He knew very well where his happiness lay, and he made the most of it. So the emperor who took a monk's habit quietly enjoyed himself in that ascetic garb, and felt much more at ease than when he was seated on his throne ordering his master of the ceremonies to usher into his presence a great number of people whom he did not want to see, and whose very presence wearied him.

Mr. Brawl, when Member of the Britannic Parliament, found out the vanity of his position, and, after spending a great deal of money and much time in London, discovered that he was a much smaller man than he thought himself before. Do what he could, he could not increase his importance. Twist and turn about in politics, put himself forward as the poor man's friend, he certainly did; but the poor man "did not seem to see it." Several gentlemen, who expected to rise by Mr. Brawl, were energetic enough in finding him jobs to do, questions to inquire into, and abuses to rectify; but the House of Commons appeared to

have made up its six hundred and fifty-eight minds on all the questions, and especially upon that one which asked whether Mr. Brawl was to become a prominent man or not. It seemed to be very unanimous as to the matter, and to vote, *nemine contradicente*, that Mr. Brawl was to remain as the obscure country Member.

So, again, with Captain Tophill: that gentleman, who had become a patron of the drama to suit his own purposes, found that he had to suit other people's purposes as well. He could not succeed in inspiring Miss Safta with that ardent affection he thought every lady whom he met should have for him. The shabby little captain had always on hand a large stock of illicit passion for any fresh object, and the obstinacy of the young lady added for a little time fuel to that guilty flame.

He took her down to Richmond, with his manager, Mr. Dunne, opened the little theatre there, brought down one or two minor stars from his company in town, and placarded the place with an announcement of the first appearance of a young lady of splendid talents. The young lady

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"You had better leave her alone, Captain," said his jackal, Mr. Dunne. "I tell you she's worth nothing, not worth your runnin' after, and she'll let you go by the board; I tell you she will: mark my words, Captain."

The Mécœnas of the British drama told his manager to "shut up," and go somewhere, to a place not mentionable to ears polite, but for which both the chief and the servitor were qualifying themselves with an infinite deal of pains and with very little enjoyment. Probably they hoped to take a high degree amongst the sad crew who would flock to that college; for if they had not some purpose in their lives, what were they living for? That was the question the captain asked his manager one day, when, after selling an estate with the object of putting money into his pocket simply to take it out to pay for his losses on his theatrical speculations, the whole purpose of his life struck the captain in such a forlorn, not to say ludicrous light, that he felt constrained to put the question to Mr. Dunne.

"Well," said Mr. Dunne, a round, fat, podgy

man, greasy-faced, and not clean in appearance—"Well, Captain, I'm sure I can't say." He rubbed one of his dirty hands once or twice, slowly, over his unshaven chin, making thereby, between the two rough substances, a grating noise, and then again spoke: "Well, I am sure you've had your enjoyment pretty well out of the little game: some people think you have been very fortunate."

"Look at the money, Dunne," said his chief, testily; for, although he "bled," as people expressed it, pretty freely, yet he must be always understood as parting from his money as he would with his blood. He lavished money on his own pleasures, perforce, because he could not get them by any other method; but the captain in reality was a very mean little man, who speculated in his theatres as a means of making money, and getting his enjoyments, such as they were, for little or nothing; nay, if things turned out as they should and ought to turn out, in the captain's private opinion, for nothing.

But the best-laid plans of philosophers often go wrong, and the captain found out very soon that

he was a mere machine, out of which money was coaxed to pay for the services of tragedians with deep voices, comedians with thin voices, artists in the ballet, and for scenery, machinery, and dresses. There was always some bill coming due. The gas-man, the engineer, or the head-carpenter was always to be called in and set to work. The most gorgeous productions never paid. "The front of the house," as Mr. Dunne phrased it, "looked beautiful;" the dress-circle was full, the boxes crammed, and the pit uproarious; and yet there was not enough taken at the doors to pay the actors.

"How is this?" cried the captain.

"Well, if you will know," said Dunne, knocking some saw-dust from his dirty hands and coming from behind the flat, "it's all paper, pretty nigh; and very good paper too, to be sure. I haven't seen such a 'andsome 'ouse for many a day."

"Handsome!" roared the captain: "coming and seeing and enjoying themselves at my expense! I can't bear it, and I won't. Wearing out my seats and decorations for nothing! and not only that, but having the impudence to damn a farce I paid forty

pounds for, and the writer one of the most influential critics of the daily press."

"Well," ejaculated Mr. Dunne, "that was bad, that was; but then, you know, the farce was uncommon bad too, and quite deserved what it got. The only part in it was for Miss Beresford, and you know what an impudent thing she is. The public don't like her."

But the mischief was, the captain did, and of the two tastes the ornate Tophill infinitely preferred his own. He was obstinate, as the half-knowing generally are, and did not for one moment give the public credit for knowing anything. Hence, what with producing weak pieces, and paying improper people to act and to manage, it was not very probable that the poor little fellow ever could recover the money he had already spent.

The captain swore bitterly at the public.

"Look here," said he: "what have I been doing for many a day for the public? and what have they been doing for me?"

Mr. Dunne confessed that it was not much.

"Not much!" said the captain, like an injured

bear—"Not much! Egad, sir, it's nothing, or next to nothing! Look here, Dunne, if you please: no more paper. Let the papers come in, if you please; but no more paper. Put up the legitimate drama, and no more paper."

"And Miss Safta—there's a deal in that girl—what are you going to do for her?"

"Nothing," said the captain, sulkily. "She's as ill-tempered as a mule, and as conceited as a parrot. Let her go. You may pay her her salary at the end of the week, and tell her her engagement is at an end."

"There was something in her articles about doo notice," said Dunne; "leastwise, if I recollect right. Cur'ous people actors are. Dashed if I know which are worse, men or women: the men are as vain as peacocks, and the women as headstrong as alligators."

Mr. Dunne made this sage reflection to get the captain's ruffled temper a little smoothed down; but it was of no use: the day was to be marked with a black stone. Safta had kept the captain playing like a fish at the end of a line; and,

however dull and blind vanity had rendered that precious little man, he had at last awakened fully to the fact that he, the captain, was being laughed at.

"They are great fools," said Dunne; "but there is good stuff in that young woman, and some day or other she will draw."

"Whether she draws or no," said the lessee, assuming the tyrant, as all lessees very often do, and as, indeed, they are obliged to do, "turn her out." Then, having vented his rage upon the lady, he became more conciliatory, paid his manager a cheque for current expenses, and left the treasury, jumping into his private cabriolet in Brydges Street, and dashing off at a rattling rate in the midst of the envy and admiration of all the boys and his own curses and self-vituperations for folly and ill-luck.

Mr. Dunne sat in the treasury rattling some loose half-crowns and shillings in his left-hand breeches-pocket, and with his right hand picking his teeth with a piece of cedar pencil which he had cunningly fashioned for the occasion. It was not until he

had broken a small portion of the wood into a hollow tooth, and made himself roar with pain, that he left off that elegant occupation. The sudden accession of pain broke into his brown study: he pulled his hand out of his pocket, retaining the last stray half-crown, and, looking out of the door, roared to one of the stage-carpenters to come to him.

"What an infernal noise you fellows are a-making!" said Dunne, with his hand to his jaw: "what's it all about?"

"Practical bridge, sir, wanted for the 'Israelite' to-night; percession goes over it, and wants it strong, sir. Mr. Raucus, as does the *King*, is a heavy man, sir; sixteen stun', at least."

"Oh, ha! well, never mind Mr. Raucus: who's Mr. Raucus? Here, go an' fetch me just a shilling's worth of brandy: I've got the toothache."

"Yes, sir," said the man, determining to make the shilling pay toll; "I'll bring it in a jiffy."

"Dash the jiffy!" said Dunne, with a grin: "bring it in a tumbler. Well, now," thought he to himself, his sudden pain having subsided, "that's

about as good a joke as they make in modern farces. I don't know what's comin' to the drama: I expect it's gone to the dogs."

All this time the manager had been plunging and poking frantically into his mouth, and at last relieved himself of his tormentor. He was delighted at this happy chance, and quite jubilant in temper when the carpenter came back, threading his way carefully through the dark scenery and the little awkward staircase which led to the treasury, and deposited the brandy-and-water on Mr. Dunne's table. The stage-carpenter was a gaunt, big-framed, pale man, greasy and dark, without the slightest approach to colour in his unhealthy cheeks, and altogether like a plant that had grown or shot up in a cellar. He looked down on the floor when Mr. Dunne spoke to him, and seemed conscious of having made the brandy-and-water pay toll.

"Well, Rogers," said Mr. Dunne, "really, do you know, I think that looks uncommon like sixpenn'orth o' brandy?"

"Spilt the rest, sir," said the guilty workman, looking down. "Passages so dark, sir, with coming

out o' the bright light. Such a beautiful day out o' doors, sir—beautiful day to go into the country." The hasty gulp of brandy-and-water, steaming hot, had a powerful effect upon the weak brain of the poor creature, and he dared—since he had nothing better to say—to thus suggest a country trip to the all-potent manager.

"William Rogers," said Mr. Dunne, gravely, "as *Hamlet* says—let's see; it may be another party, but *Hamlet* will do as well—tell truth, and shame the devil. If you hadn't a' been a fool, William, with this sort o' stuff, you might a' been head carpenter, and have made a mint o' money at contracts. Rogers, shun the glass! avoid temptation, Rogers." Here Mr. Dunne half emptied his brandy-and-water, by way of example to his inferior, and then dismissed him with a good-natured promise to excuse him.

"My hi! I thought I'd a' got the sack," said William Rogers, smacking his lips; "but it was rattlin' good, it was. Well, I must make haste with my work afore Susan comes. I've promised to take her to Waterloo Bridge to see the new

steamboats—poor Susan.” Poor Susan was his little daughter, who brought him his dinner packed in a neat yellow basin with rich dabs of blue on the sides of it, probably intended by the demented manufacturers as ornaments. The poor wretch’s only care was for this little daughter; but strong as his love was for her, his love for drinking was considerably stronger. However, as he hastened away to his work, he heard Mr. Dunne’s voice crying after him.

“Yes, sir,” said Rogers, shouting up the staircase: “what is it? I’m a-coming.”

“Rehearsal at twelve,” said the manager—“all on for the ‘Israelite.’ Tell Safta to come here to the treasury: she’s not wanted till the fourth scene, and she can spare me ten minutes. It wants a quarter to it now.”

“Very good, sir,” said the carpenter, in return. “I wonder,” said he to himself, “what he wants with that young ’ooman! Ah, she is a hactress, she is. I only wish poor Susan would take to it as she did. My! would it not be splendid! I’d ’ave a box every night to stare at her.”

Precisely at twelve, almost the first of the actors and actresses who were of any consequence, Miss Safta walked into the theatre. She was in high spirits, for she had been reading several excellent, in her sense, that is, laudatory, notices of her performances, and she saw, or thought she saw, the ball at her foot. She did not know who pulled the strings of the puppets, nor that the critic, who of course wrote for the stage, as most theatrical critics do, hoped to get the gallant captain to accept one of his pieces by praising one whom all the world knew the captain delighted to honour. For, although the lady walked as firmly and as proudly as a queen through the streets of London, and, to do her justice, was thinking only of her art, whispering tongues had not been idle about her. When are they idle about any one? Rumour went about and abroad and told many stories concerning this lady.

"That's the new conquest of the captain's," said little Pudsey to Kelsey the tobacconist.

"Ah, I saw her name pretty large in the

bills," said Kelsey, "and I thought what was up. Well, you know that's how some people get on nowadays: merit's sure to starve unless you've got a kind friend to your back."

"You're about right there," said little Pudsey, who himself aspired to tragedy. "We want the days of Garrick back, sir, when talent could hold its own: now it's starvation for talent. Do you know the sure way not to get on, Kelsey? Well, I'll tell you. Have talent; cram yourself full of study; do all that you can to deserve success, and you *won't* get it, by jingo!"

"Oh! I know that," said Kelsey, who had married a *soubrette* from the stage, a young lady who, he thought, possessed the talent of Siddons, the voice of Malibran, and the grace of Nisbet. "Oh, *I* know. Ladies as remain true to their marriage vows and love their 'usbands don't succeed; no, not if they could bring a houseful o' gold every night. We know what's up with Miss Safta, that her name's so large on the bills."

Proud, defiant still, the lady whose careless, selfish conduct gave too much occasion for this

yesty, empty talk, walked on with a jaunty step, and with all the illusions of dramatic vanity clinging closely about her. To see her name hanging in a cook-shop in Long Acre, dangling in the steam of pease-pudding, or side by side with a yellow leg of pork, gave her real pleasure. What delightful visions she had in that kind of fame, it is impossible to conceive: enough to say she really saw them. The smell of the stage entrance, of close, confined air, charged with a mixed perfume of escaped gas and rotten saw-dust, was to her pleasant rather than otherwise, although she would have widened her proud nostrils and have turned up her nose at a nicely furnished little cottage, if provided by her husband. The darkness which was blinding, the rough deal battens and frames on which was stretched canvas, the unpainted back of which she only saw, filled her with strange delight. She was an actress in her soul, in every false word or proud speech. She looked upon men as mere interlocutors, and always waited for the conclusion of a speech as she would for a cue.

“Please, mum,” said Rogers the carpenter,

lifting up his bare arm covered with swelling veins and rigid muscles, and touching his paper cap—"Please, mum, the manager wants to speak to you afore you goes on. Plenty o' time, mum, afore you're called."

"Thank'ee, Rogers," said Miss Safta, haughtily.

She already and at once anticipated a rise of salary; for, although shrewd whisperings were abroad, outside of the theatrical world, of the failure of Tophill's wild speculation, it was to be noted that the actors and actresses engaged by that gentleman always represented the theatre as filled by their own exertions and doing an "enormous business;" by which phrase they meant that it was filled by people who paid for their seats, and that the money poured into the treasury. Whenever they obtained an "order" they gave it to their friends with a confidential remark that it was the only one out that night, and that they had the greatest difficulty in obtaining it.

"I will step up to Mr. Dunne immediately, Rogers—in the treasury, I think you said?"

"Yes, mum," answered the stage-carpenter,



touching his paper cap as Miss Safta stalked proudly away.

Mr. Dunne, who was usually very polite to those whom the captain delighted to honour, gave a very curt nod and salutation to Safta, and asked her to sit down; then, taking up a paper duly docketed, and glancing over it, said—

“You see, mum, things here are not as they should be, and the lessee of this vast establishment finds that it does not pay.”

“Oh, dear!” said the lady; “I had understood quite the contrary. I have heard out of doors from the public ——”

“Never mind out o’ doors and the public,” said Dunne, testily: “what does it know? It’s as stupid as owls and blind as moles. The captain knows by an infallible test; and that test is the pocket, Miss Safta. You don’t draw a bit, ne’er a one on you. Captain says to me, ‘Dunne,’ says he, ‘these things must have an end somehow, and, ’twixt ourselves, I don’t want to go through the court.’ ‘Captain,’ says I, ‘neither on us wants to do that.’ ‘Well,’ says he, ‘what’s to be done?’

‘That’s for you to say,’ I answered. ‘Well,’ says he, ‘we must commence cutting down ;’ and thereon he looked over several agreements, and yours was one of ’em. So there’s nothing to be done, young lady, but for you to take it.”

“Take what?” said the actress, aghast, rising and drawing herself to her full height.

“Why, the sack, to be sure,” said the gentlemanly manager, with a laugh. “It’s soon done. I’ve had it given me before now, and it won’t hurt you. I’ll tell you what I should do. I should just step over to Pelter, the agent : they’re forming a company for Nottingham, and you’d just suit.”

“But my engagement is not at an end,” urged Safta, her pride deeply wounded, and her anger rising. “I shall appeal to the law.”

“If I were you,” answered Mr. Dunne, “I shouldn’t appeal to nothin’. If you do, what do we do? Why, we come forward and tells the public the real truth about you ; as you don’t draw a farden a night, not a farden.” Here the manager warmed his back, after the English fashion, and

snapped his fingers in an indignant manner. He had this way with him, which was perhaps common to gentlemen of his profession : he was very subservient to success, and extremely overbearing to non-success ; and, whether from fault or misfortune, Miss Safta, with all her undoubted talents, had not made a hit ; and, as Mr. Dunne never pretended to know whether an actor or an actress was good or bad, save from the result, he classed Safta with those indifferent and unhappy artists who pass from youth to age as mere utility drudges.

Safta looked at the podgy man, with his black velvet waistcoat, his vulgar, sensual face, his short, inelegant figure, with a look of ineffable scorn. " Very good, sir," she said, with an inflexion of her fine voice which made even the brazen Dunne feel ashamed. " I know what to do. I leave with equal contempt for you and your master. You may keep the paltry money ;" and she swept from the room with the walk of a tragedy queen.

" 'Pon my word," shouted Dunne after her, " I never saw you act so well before, my dear—never. Plucky gal," he said to himself, thoughtfully ;

“there may be some talent in her, after all ; but, la ! there, it’s impossible to say. She was a fool, though, to leave her money.”

But leave it she did, with a royal disdain for Dunne and Tophill. Happily, she took, and took at once, the advice of the former, and applied at Pelter’s office ; and that gentleman happening to be sober (he was very much the other, as he said, five days out of six), he saw at once that he had no ordinary person to deal with, and with great promptness fitted her with an excellent engagement at Edinburgh, where, after twelve months’ work, she established herself as a popular actress.

“S’elp me,” hiccoughed Mr. Dunne, long after the captain had been nearly ruined, and had given up the theatre ; “I made that gal—knew she was a genius, and gave her a chance in the provinces, by jingo !”

CHAPTER IX.

SIX YEARS AFTER.

THAT which puzzles most of us is, how to stay Time's progress; for, indeed, he does not only gallop with the happy and the successful, but with the unhappy and the sad. With the townsfolk of Bilscombe Regis Time passed more slowly than with most people. Whether in the short winter days, or the long summer Sunday hours when the beech-woods seemed to dream away their leafy and green existence with a pleasant murmur of warmth and joy, when the humble bee sang in and out the woody glades and went about his work with a mere pretence of business, in fact, a laborious idleness, which was evidently maddening

to the common working bee, which, as it gathered its honey, rushed past him with an indignant buzz ; or in the autumn drowsy and warm, or the spring brisk and sharp, when the way-sides were blue with violets and the woods white with wild anemones,—Time in Bilscombe went but slowly.

It of course did not progress very fast at the “Falcon,” the business of which had been bad six years before, and which had not got any better. The coach drove up as it always did, and perhaps would not have driven if there had not been with some wild speculators a mad talk of a branch railway from the Great Western being made expressly for the Bilscombians. The local paper—there had been a local paper started, the inside of which was printed in London, and the outside, consisting of standing advertisements and one ungrammatical leader, in the town—was very much in favour of a railway, and calculated that the enormous number of at least twenty persons per week would be induced to visit the great Metropolis ; which change of location the editor—a printer and stationer—declared would be “a civilizing boon.”

When votes in favour of this boon were canvassed at the "Falcon," the landlord was seized with a deep spirit of opposition; for did not the coach which went to London, and managed now to call at a distant railway-station, bring all the Bilscombe visitors to his door? He therefore stuck up his "motter," as he called it, which was "No surrender," and declared that he would "run horse-flesh against tea-kettles any day."

For awhile the horse-flesh had the better of the tea-kettles. One or two engineers and architects came down to Bilscombe, surveyed the place, selected the site for the terminus, an old Methodist chapel which had been built a hundred years before by one of John Wesley's itinerants, and created some stir by assuring several cottagers and others that they would have to "turn out." Thereupon the cottagers rubbed their heads and looked grave; but, being mindful of some compensation, and determined to claim something enormous, they brightened up and looked cheerful again. But the railway scheme came to little or nothing. Whether it was that Earl Bradstock

[illegible]

The Methodists had not regained their original liveliness, nor had the other extreme holders of Christian faith made much progress. The Piscatorians were in *statu quo*: the novelty had worn off; and some one or two ardent young fellows who had shaved their heads and had worn the habit of that excellent order had long ago repented, and wished themselves back again under the mild and pure rule of the Anglican

Church. As for Father Gargle, time had wonderfully improved him ; and, with a wide charity, his old friends of the Establishment loved the man and honoured his learning just as much as when he was amongst them. But, to say the truth, Father Gargle, although he now and then took up literary cudgels and belaboured his good old mother Church with satire and polished rhetoric, till her bones, metaphorically speaking, ought to have ached and been sore, was not Ultramontane either in heart or in practice. Vanity and love of power might have led him away from the Church he was brought up in, but he was an Englishman at heart, and a man of a pure life and tender conscience. Thus neither Miss Nightley nor Lady Amethyst progressed much in the favour of this good man; but as he had within him, in his very nature, a secretiveness and a tendency to love control and worship power, which may, indeed, be found in most Churchmen, he held his own way without revealing anything which fell into the circle of his knowledge, and kept onward in the path he had chosen.

Lady Somers had mysteriously kept secret her whereabouts; and the mystery, which now and then might be whispered about, was beyond penetration. The disappearance of the leaf from the church register had long been brought to light, but without any effect. The Thespian and his employer were alike silent about a matter of which the latter knew and wanted to know little or nothing. That worthy gentleman had not risen or fallen in the world; he had not been blessed with any children, and had managed to keep together the wreck of a business which, in more honourable hands, might have made a fortune. Miss Nightley did not, and with some cause, look upon him with much favour, since she had dealt with him and had been worsted in the transaction.

The discovery of the stolen leaf had been made by our old friend Crosbie Vivyan Hope, who, wandering to town in his eccentric manner, had gone to the church to examine the register, strongly suspecting that Stannard had played him false. But, as matters had turned out, nothing of importance had been done against the principal

persons concerned, and, by the advice of the honest lawyer, who put the theft at once down to Stannard's account, all were silent upon it. The petard with which Miss Nightley had intended to blow into fragments the fortunes of Emmy and her son had exploded harmlessly; and although Dr. Morton saw in the incident that which made him ten times more careful of his charge, he was too wise and cautious to open his lips upon the matter.

Our Bohemian baronet had prospered, and in six years had grown to be a rich man. He had bought back, with the ready money left him by his relation, part of his estates and upon one portion in Wales, which had been more than once sold and repurchased by the Crosbies, from a legend that mineral riches there abounded, a mine of some wealth had been discovered. The gentle boy, now a young and thriving engineer, having gone down to this estate, had examined the old workings, which an adventurous but not wealthy former proprietor had hastily commenced and as hastily left off. His report had convinced the firm in

which he had been educated of the practicability of working the old mine to some advantage, and a fresh accession of wealth fell to his father. Our honest lawyer, Mr. Frederick Hosier, who had been introduced to the baronet by Dr. Juniper, was installed as solicitor to the company which was formed, and hitherto matters had exceeded the utmost expectations founded on the report of young Mr. Hope's friends and employers; so that our old friend pointed with much pride to the heraldic insignia, freshly painted, gilt, and varnished, which were about his old home, to which, with much rejoicings, the old family had returned. The eccentricity of the baronet was marked in an especial manner by his giving a splendid entertainment to some gentlemen from London of a profession, some were bold enough to say, even infinitely lower than that of acting. But we must remember country prejudices. The fact was that the baronet entertained his friend the Warlock of the South during a professional engagement at Brighton; and the merriment of the party, chiefly gentlemen from London, amongst whom were

Mr. Hosier and Dr. Juniper, quite astonished the happy Sussex villagers who took part in the service of the baronet's establishment. The speech of the Warlock, written for him on the occasion by another Bohemian, an author, was considered a masterpiece ; and Mr. Hosier, to the immense delight of the company, sang a comic song, accompanying himself, if one may so term it, between the verses, on a tin whistle of prodigious power and shrillness.

Dr. Morton, who should have been there, could not leave his charge at Bilscombe. If all others had forgotten Lady Somers, this meek-spirited, patient doctor had not. Oftentimes, binding Miss Lotty with solemn promises, which had all the weight of oaths, the poor fellow set off on long journeys upon missions the end and aim of which only Lotty knew, which were to fetch back the wanderer to her home. But it is to be presumed that the good doctor was many times misled ; for he came back to his house upon the hill wearied and worn out, and somewhat sadder than ever.

But Keith Morton was, as has been stated, hardly the man to wear his heart upon his sleeve

for daws to peck at. Lotty only knew of her brother's constant care and prayer : to others he was outwardly a strong, hearty, jovial man, a great worker, doing good in his generation, and rising early in the morning as well as in the world. Late he worked into the night ; and often, when all Bilscombe was wrapped in darkness, and its inhabitants were, it is presumed, snugly covered up in their sheets, blankets, and counterpanes, the light from the doctor's study shone out like a solitary star resting on the hill-side. Constant work may bring ill-health, and with the weak it does so ; but with men of an iron frame like Morton it brings surcease from many troubles and anxious thoughts. The doctor had nothing to do but to work : had he remained still, he would have turned gray or mad. His love for this woman revived after the young lord had been some time dead, and haunted him like a passion. Revived ! it had never been dead ; but at one time he dared not to cherish it : now it had come back with all its force. He would not, because he could not, believe her dead. He would shudder and grow pale at the bare thought,

and then beat it back and go to work again. But this work did him much good : his contributions to journals of his profession, his discoveries and suggestions, made him sought for everywhere. Dr. Juniper, a "rising young man" of about forty, quoted his friend wherever he went, and in difficult cases Dr. Morton came often even to London, and very frequently to neighbouring and distant county towns. He was not averse to this ; and it was observed that, whilst the watch at Bilscombe was doubled, and Lotty or Mrs. Lapis never left their precious charge, the doctor went forth elated and returned somewhat saddened.

Still he was a brave man, and in all his long hope deferred never once bated a jot of faith in the end. "She is not here to-day," he would say to himself, with a sad sigh, as he rose in the morning or retired to rest : "she will come to-morrow."

"Brother, brother," said Lotty, one day, parting his brown hair, and looking at one or two silver streaks just at the side of his temples, "time is running on. Here is nobody coming to marry me ; but are you not going to look out?"

"Nobody coming to marry you, you sly puss!" said Keith, with a laugh. "Wait a little. What did Dr. Juniper say the other day to you in the stable? You were a long time there, I'm thinking."

"Bless me!" returned Lotty, blushing; "he and I were merely examining the Countess. She gets a little older and a little whiter. Dr. Juniper wished he had been a veterinary surgeon; for, on carefully examining her hoofs, he said he thought he saw the way to a new patent shoe which would supersede all other shoes."

"Was that all?" asked the doctor, slyly.

"Well, no, Keith," said Lotty, kissing him, and bending down her head as she spoke; "but I told him to speak to me again when Lady Somers was found; for I could not leave you and your charge."

"And what did he say to that?"

"He said it was like postponing it *sine die*, Keith," returned Miss Morton, somewhat sadly; to do her justice, not on Dr. Juniper's account.

"Ah! did he?" said Keith, somewhat hastily, as if to reassure himself: "so you all think; but you are all wrong—all wrong."

"What a dear good fellow you are, Keith!" said Lotty, clinging round his neck. "I will never leave you till she does come back—never; not if I die an old maid; and that honourable condition really appears hateful to Englishwomen. *I* don't see anything hateful in it; but I should, Keith, if I could but find one so true, so honourable, so affectionate as you to love me. Ah me! why did I not know you? and why was I not somebody else's sister?"

"It would not have done," said Keith, gently—"It would not have done, Lotty, unless you had also been one of Mr. Everingham's daughters, and he had only one. To love for love's sake, and one only; that is my motto. Do you know, I would not let men marry again? I join Dr. Whiston's side of the Whistonian controversy."

"And for us women?" asked his sister.

"Ah!" said Morton, hastily; "I was speaking of widowers, not widows. Perhaps, though, the

rule is as good for one as another. Have you seen Lord Bradstock to-day?"

"Oh yes; he called, and took little Felix out in a pony-carriage. What a dear good boy it is, Keith! but how backward with his tongue! Mary came to-day to see him, and she says that he is quite forward enough. How fond the Earl is! his whole heart is wrapped up in him. He ought to be obliged to you for preserving the heir to his estates."

"So he is. You don't know how many kind things he has said, nor what he has offered me. But good-bye: I have an experiment in process which I must see to."

Away went the doctor, whistling. His mind was at work, his trouble for the moment forgotten.

The little boy was, as Lotty described him, a dear little fellow; sociable, very affectionate, but unteachable. He hardly ever spoke. Some few words he said; although the easiest, "mamma" and "papa," were not in his vocabulary. He could call his grandfather, and, for the rest, he

could make everybody around him understand well enough what he wanted by signs and gestures. He did not have much trouble to do so, for almost every look and motion was anticipated. He was now six years old, well grown for his age, with a thoughtful, melancholy expression when at rest, buoyant and active when playing, easily tired, and fond of musing or thinking, as Mrs. Lapis called it; only, poor boy, he had little to think about, for he knew nothing. Not a letter nor a lesson had he been taught from a book. He was fond of pictures; but, except the study of the pictorial art provided for boys of his age, an art which, perhaps, could not teach him much, he never opened a book. The doctor had given strict orders that he should not be put to his lessons till he was seven years old, at least.

Bilscombe Church is a very fine structure, of which the Bilscombians are justly proud. They call it a cathedral, "the county cathedral," when they are up in their stirrups and given to boasting; and in size it really does make some pretensions to approach the dignity of a very little cathedral.


The High Church movement had not then reached Bilscombe, or the fine old oak abominations called pews would have been done away with and the magnificent proportions of the church would have been seen. But of all abominations in pews, Bilscombe boasted the worst. In the good old lazy days of the parsons of the Church, when they seemed to pride themselves more on port wine and hunting than on preaching and doing their duty, some one of these gentlemen and his churchwardens had allowed the reigning sovereign of Bilscombe to build at the top of the chancel-arch a very fine lancet-headed one; a structure something like a mahogany bird-cage, and the glass case which contains the young ladies and uneatable refreshments at a railway junction. It was approached from the chancel by its own private staircase. It had chairs, a sofa, a carpet, rug, open stove, fender, and fire-irons in it, and a small library of books of divinity. Therein, in this profane opera-box, with an open window to hear the service, sat the reigning monarch of Broad-acres, looking down upon the congregation. If he

liked the sermon, he would listen ; if not, he has been known to shut himself savagely in and entertain himself, so it was whispered, with a novel, or even a pack of cards.

The present Lord Broadacres had not removed this heathen excrescence, since he loved all old things, and the opera-box was one in which he had seen his father, and in which the city Countess went and said her simple prayers. What did it matter to her, good soul, where she said them ? She and dear old Phœbe used to enter the carpeted bower with reverence, and kneel and pray with the congregation, in good faith believing that such great people as marriage had made the Countess ought to have some peculiar and distinctive praying-place. The Countess held it in much awe, and in times of trouble has, upon week-days, been known to go and steal up into that sacred glazed box and there remain in meditation, gaining, in some measure, internal comfort and strength therefrom. Hence, for the sake of both parents, the Earl felt attached to his ancestral pew.

When little Felix, Lord Somers, was old enough

to go to church, which he had to do at the early age of four, to set a good example to wild young fellows of his age who would rather have stayed at home and played with a profane jack-in-the-box (to which they likened, in their infantine way, the preachers)—when little Felix went to church for the first time he was attracted by that gorgeous pew: a ray of sunlight had just touched one of the windows. When he was five years of age and of somewhat maturer judgment, he signified his intention of going up there, having seen a bird—as is often the case in country churches—fly about the chancel, and, as he fancied, out of the glass case. Lord Bradstock ordered this fancy to be indulged, and, with great gravity and secret approval of the boy's wisdom, removed from his lower seat to the family birds-nest. There Lotty took her young charge, and thence the silent boy gazed down upon the gesticulating clergyman or the sonorous clerk. What his young imagination thought of those great people was never known, since he did not venture to speak. Lotty and Lord Bradstock, at different ends of the pew, watched



him when they took their eyes from their prayer-books, which was very often.

Lady Amethyst never came to the church. She had wholly embarked in the cause which her father, Lord Stormore, had so thoroughly embraced; but now and then, although she sided with her patroness, Miss Nightley would beg a seat in the Earl's pew, and he, with his stately courtesy, would grant it. It was "there for the family," he said.

There of a Sunday Miss Nightley would come and approach as near as she could to the little boy, watched as he was by Lotty. These two ladies knew each other pretty well, and not a lozenge or a bonbon would Lotty suffer him to take from the companion.

"Does the fool think I would poison him?" asked Miss Nightley of Lady Amethyst, as she told of Lotty's vigilance. "I know a trick worth two of that. There the booby is, never speaking, never smiling, but watch, watch, watching every woman's face that comes to church. I wonder whether he is waiting for that excellent mother of

his who has disappeared so mysteriously ! He never speaks, and when I come in he avoids me. The boy's a fool !”

“ Hardly a fool for that,” said Lady Amethyst, bitterly ; and, on the whole, she was right ; but she said little or nothing more as she sat looking at her friend, who, biting the nether lip till it was bloodless, and smiling to herself, walked up and down the parlour with a defiant air. “ She has something on her mind,” said Amethyst to herself. Perhaps she had.

CHAPTER X.

THE LONELY HEART.

DURING the time the doctor was mourning for his lost love, there was another heart gradually awakening to the world again, recovering from a long, sad dream; a painful, weary period of remorse, sorrow, and inaction, which had lain like an incubus upon it, and in the sad sweetness of which it had willingly indulged, in silence and seclusion.


A great moral poet—a very great poet, too, although many of our too hasty wits will assert that he is dull and prosy—tells us that the Almighty hides from all eyes but his own—

“That hideous thing, a naked human heart;”

an assertion which has the merit of being as true

as it is unromantic. How many lovers who, as all lovers have done, have found the ideal one would consent to this awful proposition, that the naked human heart is hideous? Terrible, however, it is; and some few novelists have had the temerity to try and paint a man's heart in all its desperate villainy. Few, however, have dared to show that of woman in its weakness.

Alas! the heart of our heroine was not a very strong one. She had fallen in love, because she thought that the man of rank who loved her was the most generous, excellent, admirable, and handsome young fellow in the world, which, it must be granted, is a very good reason; and when she found herself a widow, she, perhaps without sufficient reason, believed herself to be one of the most miserable and unfortunate of women. She refused to be comforted. To be up and doing was not her maxim: to be dull and weep, to complain to Heaven, to be indignant with those about her, and to call upon all around her for pity and condolence, were, for many long years, the chief impulses of this pretty little woman's heart.



I do not say that she was wholly to blame. To be lifted up to the height of happiness, merely, it would seem, for the purpose of being knocked down again, is not pleasant. It is, perhaps, even more unpleasant if such a proceeding takes place after emerging from misfortunes which have persecuted one for a time long prior to the trouble. In short, misery is misery, all the world over, and trouble is trouble, and very troublesome it is to bear. *Eh, bien!* Emmy did not like to bear it at all. She would rather not walk on under the burden: she was ready to lie down and die.

For such a subject, Father Gargle and his Retreat were, perhaps, the best person and place that could possibly be found. It was a curious house, this place, but well fitted for what it was. The sisters alternately cooked and worked for each other; cooking in the kitchen, and turning the drawing-room into a refectory. The thick shutters were closed half-way up all over the house; the glances of the earth were purposely warded off, and the only light let in upon the inhabitants was that of heaven.

System ruled supreme : habit was strong upon the sisterhood. To rise early, and then to sit upon one's bed and meditate ; not to speak with your fellows until the Superior first addressed the whole ; to march to prayers, silently and with slipshod, faltering steps ; even to pray silently, except when the whole joined in a somewhat weak and cold-drawn hymn, which, however, breathed forth mystic and ecstatic devotion, and which, perhaps, half the sisterhood could not understand ; to go in order, after having prayed, to an insufficient and not very cheery breakfast—seemed to Emmy to be the proper things to do to punish herself and the world.

To walk slowly, speak low, order herself lowly and meekly ; to kneel down and force prayers from her heart, prayers, alas ! rendered often useless by unmeaning repetition ; to represent herself as a worm, a shred of humanity, a something vile, which had not exactly any business to be born, and which the Almighty was, perhaps, rather more angry with than with any other of his creatures which he had so beneficently made and endowed—

such actions, prayers, and thoughts comforted her sick mind. Nine times a day a little soft-voiced bell called the sisters to prayers; nineteen times a day they used pious ejaculations, and they should have used them ninety. Their hearts and souls did not belong to this earth: their bodies, legs, and arms—I hope it is not profane so to speak—could not belong to it or to themselves. The poor ladies were never, even in their beds, warm; except, perhaps, in the hottest summer: certainly they were always hungry and somewhat thirsty. Many of them had dry lips and moist eyes; some were oppressed and deeply melancholy, and would, when fit time and opportunity occurred, unburden their souls to each other, and accuse themselves of the most awful of sins. How wicked they had been was only excelled by the knowledge—sweet, but sinful knowledge—of how wicked the outside world was.

Mrs. Emmy—Sister Agatha, I should say—moved amongst these broken-down wrecks of humanity as something very superior to the rest of them. To do her justice, she did not confess, not

even to Father Gargle; nor, although she had taken the name, self-conferred, of Sister Agatha, did she entirely conform to the Romanist community in which she dwelt. She was among them, not of them; and she had a dozen excuses to the same number of attacks made upon her by the Superior.

But her guardian was Father Gargle. Had that gentleman had humour, that divine quality which the best and greatest of men are always so largely endowed with, he would probably never have entered the Church which he adorned and had taken orders in; he would quietly one day have insisted upon all the sisters playing at a game of bagatelle or lawn-billiards, to put a little life into them. On the Continent, and on St. Innocents' Day, the youngest nuns assume the office of the Superior, and lead the elders a pretty life with their dogmatic orders. But, alas! with these waifs and strays of womanhood there was no merriment; all fun, cheerfulness, and jollity had departed; and not the ghost of a smile, except on Father Gargle's face, did Emmy see whilst she was amongst them. Had she seen

this, she would most likely have joined them, and have fled from her friends for ever.

"Sister Agatha," said the Superior, one day, to her, putting, in a friendly way and with more warmth than she usually showed, her hand upon Emmy's shoulder, "why do you not form a closer tie with us? Do you not love us?"

"Yes," said Emmy, humbly.

"And have you not been happy here, very happy? We have no merriment, it is true. We are of the old Church which has been so maligned abroad because of the frivolities of the convent: we are of those earnest souls who have fled out of the pale of the State Church; and we know, therefore, the value of the example we are setting to others."

That was indeed, perhaps, the reason that asceticism so prevailed at the Retreat; an asceticism which suited Emmy's temper and flattered her pride; for was she not punishing herself for having dared to love and dared to lose so beautiful and divine a husband?

"You will perhaps complain," said the Superior, as if forgetting to whom she was talking, and

going on in rather a cut-and-dried manner—"You will perhaps complain that nothing belongs to you, or will belong to you if you join us?"

"No," thought Emmy; "I would not. I don't want any money: I have plenty, if she only knew all. Let them take it: they would not receive me. I have none to love me since he went away. Even my child would have been taught to love some other if I had remained with him, and no doubt does love some other now."

The Superior, however, receiving no answer, continued a speech which had the merit of assuring as well as delighting herself, if it did not convince Lady Somers.

"We are poor; but are not the very best on earth poor also? were not God's saints poor? We work: do not all good people work too? Here are hours of silence for proper meditation, hours for service, hours for prayer. If we are poor and lowly, we have to thank God we have enough; no disease springs from our superfluity; and when we die we shall not have to bear the curse of Dives for luxury and greediness. If nothing earthly

belongs to us, we have yet the unsearchable riches of Heaven, to which we belong, and which will neither despise nor reject us. We have no ties on earth——”

Here Emmy began to think of one tie, and one alone, and let a few tears fall.

“But we have ties in heaven, and in this house we are all sisters; for we love and pray for the whole world, since the love of individuals is forbidden us. We are shut up away from temptation; we are cloistered, but secure. Our bodies may be indeed tied down to one spot of earth, but our souls escape beyond the walls of this Retreat and enter the wide courts of heaven itself. And here how calm we are! Outside are vain show, much perturbation, hurry, trouble, hatred, malice, and all uncharitableness; but inside this house are rest and peace. How many wrecked and wearied souls, if they could but enter this peaceful haven, would seek to come in here! The Protestants, as they impudently call themselves, protesting, forsooth, against our errors, have no haven of rest like this. Here you may think down all your follies, and,

without any chance of having all your good resolutions trodden underfoot, may determine to live the new life of peace and joy."

If Lady Somers did not attend to the words of the Superior, many others did. The excellent woman was a little queen in her Retreat, and was a most benevolently absolute monarch, but absolute she was. Nor can it be said that the ladies who took refuge in those quiet walls were unhappy. Flying in, like storm-beaten doves into a quiet valley protected by mountains from the raging elements without, the air of peace, the dull routine of regularity, the constant prayers, had a soothing effect upon all of them; and, as may be supposed, the good sisters attributed the effect of much that was purely mechanical to spiritual aid and comfort.

When a sister fell sick, which, alas! thought some of them, was very seldom, nothing could exceed the kindness of the whole community. Rules of some austerity were broken through; flowers adorned the tables of the little cells into which by thick wooden partitions the large ram-

bling bed-rooms had been divided; the father himself brought and presented to the Superior fruit and wine, if needed; and every one of the sisters, each of whom served in rotation, was anxious that her turn might come round, and that she might aid and nurse her friend. The nurses liked their office, no doubt, better than the sick lady: there is an instinctive wish in the bosoms of all of us to be useful to each other and to the world, and in nursing the sick some of these ladies found a very proper and congenial sphere. Often it was in vain that the invalid protested that she was well enough to join in the daily service and periodical fasting. The nurses whose turn was about to "come on" looked anxiously and prayed, with, indeed, but little devotion, for the recovery of the sister, and the nurse who officiated and moved noiselessly about the chamber of the invalid assured her that, in spite of her feelings, she was not half recovered.

In these nursings Emmy was permitted to take her share; and from one invalid she learned much, and to her she formed some little attachment.

She was rather angry at this feeling. Her heart was again, she thought, taking to the world; and she apostrophized her dead saint with much self-blame, telling him again and again that she was wrong to love any one else but his memory. She had been thus schooling herself when she returned to take her place by the side of the sick sister, a small but beautifully formed lady, a lady in every sense of the word, who lay ill through weakness, possibly through mere inanition and want of stimulating food. There was no particular disease; but not the less certainly the sister Martha was very, very ill. She was as patient and gentle as a dove, and Emmy loved to nurse her. When the latter entered her room Martha was leaning on her elbow looking intently at a jonquil and a primula, flowers which the good father had procured from the Abbey and had sent up to her cell.

"Look," she cried—"Look, Sister Agatha! how beautiful are these! How wonderfully God works! How delicately beautiful is his world!"

"We have retired from the world," said Emmy,

gently, but gloomily: "we want no more of its beauty or its ugliness."

"Indeed!" said Martha, with a sigh, looking again on the sweet flowers; "do you say so—and so young? How you must have suffered!"

Emmy was silent. She very seldom indeed spoke about herself.

"Ah!" continued Martha; "I too have suffered. But I have been thinking, sister, that others suffer in the world as well as we do, and that, perhaps, we are wrong to withdraw ourselves from doing them service and giving them comfort. Others are fighting the good fight, no doubt; while we withdraw ourselves from the battle, and leave them to struggle on and alone."

"Hush!" said Emmy—for the tones of the sister touched her—"you must not speak like that. You have bidden the outer world farewell, and I may, perhaps, do so; but your words would turn away and render faint my resolution. Why did you speak so? What do we know of the bitter outer world?"

"That good doctor, whom sometimes, in extreme cases, our kind friends call in, was here yesterday, because both the Superior and Father Gargle thought that I was worse than I was. I am sure he has suffered. There is that in his mind, in his manner, in his eyes. He looked round now and then, as he sat feeling my feeble pulse, as if he sought something and could not find it, and had sought it for years. I know what he seeks for: in his face I read my own history."

"What does he seek, Martha?" said Emmy, with a low, husky, querulous voice; "and what can you know about the man? We know nothing of the people round here: they hate us, and are not with us."

"Ah!" said Martha; "but in his whitening hair, although his heart and face are young, I read my own story. He seeks what I sought, and that which I never found, and broke my heart in seeking."

Two large round tears gathered in the little lady's eyes, and then, overflowing the lower lids,

fell in little sparkles in the pure morning light down her pale cheeks, and rested on the flowers like two beads of dew.

"What was it—a brother, a sister?" said Emmy, the tears rising as she spoke.

"Ah no!" answered Martha, gently: "it was love."

There was a silence in the little sanatorium as the sick sister said the word. It seemed to break the spell of coldness between the two women. Emmy ran to her and knelt on her bed, placing her arm round her and kissing her warmly.

"You shall have mine," she cried, "Sister Martha—you shall have mine. I want love—a sister's love; I do, indeed."

"Poor little thing!" said the sick sister, smoothing Emmy's beautiful thick but straight banded hair, which she wore under a neat little cap; for, not having taken her vows, she had not denuded herself of "woman's chief ornament"—"Poor little thing! a great big brother's love would be much better. I am afraid, although it's wicked to say

so, a sister's love is not very much for us. We do not nourish our hearts on it. I had sisters; but I loved one; how truly, Heaven knows. I was rich; and, as everybody told him it would be a good match—thus in the world they talk of women's hearts—and as our parents had determined we should marry, we were married. Alas! if I loved him, he loved another. If he had not been urged and forced to marry me, he would have followed the dictates of his own heart, which was honourable and true. As it was, he could not help, poor fellow," said the little woman, forgiving her husband in her heart, "regarding me as the hateful cause of his unhappiness. But think, Sister Agatha—think of a wedded life which passed on day by day without love, without any cheering response, without a look of affection. I was like a poor little flower in a dark cellar yearning for light, dying for light, and getting none. I was like a little bird imprisoned in an ice-well: I sang and I fluttered till I was frozen to death."

"But was he only coldly cruel?" asked Emmy.

"I have heard in the world of such stories. Had you nothing else to bear?"

"Ah yes!" said Sister Martha; "much more: the reproach of my mother and sisters, and of his mother too, who told me I did not do my duty as a wife. I had one little boy, a weakly little thing; and even he did not love me as he loved his father, who, to do him justice, loved his son. And so I wanted love all through my wedded life. When the little boy died my husband became more gloomy and morose. The woman he had loved was wedded and unhappy too, and she died broken-hearted, as he told me with bitter reproaches. These, at last, his furious temper, his coldness, and his suspicious hatred, I could not bear, and I separated from him and fled to this place. My husband is a morose man, now living in a rapid career of folly and vice: can I do better than pray for him here?"

"Perhaps not," said Emmy, drawing a comparison between her own fate and that of Martha. For herself she had been beloved, not by one, but by two good men; and the poor little

“there may be
la! there, it’s i
though, to leave

But leave it
Dunne and Topl
once, the advice
office; and that
(he was very mu
of six), he saw a
son to deal with
her with an exc
where, after two
herself as a pop.

“S’elp me,”
the captain ha
up the theatre
was a genius
provinces, by

in my heart. People who do not understand love play with affection till it is dead and past all help. It is too late !”

Sister Martha turned her face to the wall very quietly, and Sister Agatha took up the flowers with the tear-drop still in the cup of the jonquil.

“Too late !” she repeated to herself, with a strange fear. “Poor lonely heart ! poor lonely heart !”

CHAPTER XL


THE WARLOCK PREPARES FOR A GRAND
COUP DE THÉÂTRE.

THE great Warlock of the South, who had been before the public for some twenty years, took it into his head that the time had come for him to retire.

Public men, however, such as our friend the Warlock was, find that it is a very hard struggle to run away from the foot-lights. One of the most curious feelings, perhaps, in the theatrical breast is that which bids an actor always be an actor, and, even after his histrionic decease, revisit many times the glimpses of the moon, or, rather, the "float" of foot-lights which marks the boundary of his magic empire. Hazlitt wrote an essay under the query of "Whether Actors should Sit

in the Boxes." Why did he do this? Simply because he, as well as every observant man, was aware that actors, when they have holidays, spend them in the theatre, and enjoy themselves by going from the back of the scenes to the front of the house; so hard is it for them to tear themselves away from their profession.

The Warlock was not an exception to the rule; although, instead of being a comedian, he was a mere conjurer, and, to say the truth, often looked down upon as a conjurer by the brethren of "the sock and buskin," as theatrical penny-a-liners often still term them. The Warlock was, moreover, getting rich in his profession and tired somewhat of his varied travels. He had performed before "Prester-John, the King of Bohemia, the Emperor of the Asturias, and the Queen of the Two Sicilies." The artists whom he employed to produce and stick his bills—external decorators, as they euphoniously termed themselves—had covered the walls of all the principal towns in England with pictures of the Warlock going through his great trick of cutting off the head of one of the specta-



tors, placing the body under a cover, and then restoring the victim, greatly to his own surprise, alive, to the bosom of his family, until the little boys knew it by heart. These young gentlemen, who are not, unhappily, able to pay for admission to such splendours, enjoy these *al fresco* entertainments amazingly; and one of the uses of the external decorator perhaps may be, although he does not know it, to amuse the juvenile population of our large towns.

"Tell yer it's him," cries little Billy in rags to small Bobby in tatters. "That's the King of the Sandwiggers, and the man in a black coat is the Warlock."

"Why, you never a' bin and gone and seed him!" urges the smaller tatterdemalion; "have yer?"

"Well, if I ain't, my cousin's sister's servant's with a gen'leman who's bin, and he told her all about it."

This satisfies Bobby, who looks upon Billy as a man in the middle class looks upon a friend who has a friend who is an M.P., and who, therefore,

can bring home to his business and bosom scraps of authentic information about the grand tongue-tournament which took place between the Chancellor of the Exchequer and the gentleman who differed from him, not only in the estimation of his own talents, but also about the malt-tax.

"And who's the man in blue, with mustarchers, a chest like a cock-sparrer, and them two yellor pocket-handkerchers on his shoulders?" asks Bobby.

"Pocket-handkerchers!" sneers Billy: "why, that's a Nemperor, and them's all gold on his shoulders; and the conjurer's cuttin' a man's 'ead off, 'cause he did some murder or another." This is said in a vague way, and irritates Bobby, who takes up a "dab" of mud in his small fist, and throws it in the "Nemperor's" eye. To such indignities from mischievous boys are the portraits of all great people, when thus publicly exhibited, subjected. The poor bill-stickers uselessly mourn; but they weep in vain: the boys are much too active for them.

"Fifteen 'under' pound did that man spend with

me," said one of these gentlemen, "with that coloured bill all over the country. Fifteen 'under' ! more like three thousand afore it were done with. Never was a work of hart like it. Talk about pictures in papers ! why, this was the best pictur I ever see, and the likeness was immense. The King of the Sandwichers applied to the Warlock for copies, and has papered his drawing-room with it ; and werry good taste of his Majesty. Well, I say, with all the money spent upon it, blowed if I can keep the faces clean for an hour. Directly a new bill's up, them boys comes by and picks their eyes out, if they're low enough ; or, if not, they shies a dab of mud on their very noses. Blowed if I can understand their fun."

The conversation and soliloquy took place *à propos* of the Warlock's farewell benefit or series of benefits ; for he had announced to all the world, in blue, yellow, red, green, pink, lavender, and white bills, some thrown down areas, some scattered into back gardens by means of balloons, that he was about to take leave of it. The world did not seem very sorry about the matter, and the

Warlock then brought out his huge coloured posters, and took it, as he said by storm.

“The great Anglo-Americano-Scotico-Hybernico Prestidigitateur, in his researches into the Philosophy of the Hidden and Obscure, following the footsteps of Aureolus Paracelsus, Dr. Dee, Eutropius, Polybius, and the Thaumaturgists, exploring the wonders of the Deepnosophists as explained by Herodotus in his history, book *Euterpe*, sec.iv., had fallen upon some wonderful discoveries which he could present, and was anxious to present, in all their mystery before his early patrons, a London audience, for the last time; for the secret should die with him.”

It is to be hoped that none of our critical readers will put any trust in the scholarship of the Warlock; for his bills were now written by an inferior hand to Herbert Stannard, and were often very comical in the way in which they mixed up historical names. But these appeals had an immense effect upon the public; and the industrious Warlock, who did his reading by deputy, and a good many of his best tricks by machinery, would

have been floored by a school-boy of ten as to Herodotus and the Egyptians. He used often to regret Stannard, and wondered that he heard not from him. That worthy had vanished out of sight; for in America he took another name, and was making a rapid fortune.

To America the Warlock intended to travel; new scenes and a short rest, which he called "final retirement," being necessary for a performer whose power had become somewhat jaded and whose tricks were rather stale. It is indicative of the power of the man and the large way he did matters, to note that, instead of taking a modest adieu in some moderate place of exhibition, he took one of the largest theatres, vacated by Captain Tophill, Mr. Dunne, and the legitimate company some years before. Now as a man may get into a bad state of health, so will a theatre, and this one in Brydges Street became subject to fits. Very bad fits they were, too. Sometimes a great tragedian took it who had made a little money and possessed an immense belief in himself; and then, of course—modest man! as

he said, he could not play all the parts himself—the house would break down, and the great tragedian would walk through the Bankruptcy Court into the provinces to recover himself. Then a little actress who could dance, sing, and look pretty would becomelessee, and open the theatre with burlesque and ballet; but she, after a struggle, would be ruined—or some one would be ruined for her: it amounted to the same thing—by the huge size of the house. How could they convert that forest of canvas into an Armida's bower glittering with gems? Next a light comedian would take the theatre for comedies and operettas, but with no better effect. The tragedian stalked through, the *soubrette* danced through, and the comedian skipped through the Bankruptcy Court, and the Theatre Royal, Brydges Street, got abandoned and was empty.

Of all the dreary things in the world, a theatre lapsing into mouldiness and blue dirt is the dreariest. What though the company did cut off the gas, still the ghosts of damp smells, of gas, and of orange-peel haunted the house, and the old door-keeper and a superannuated fireman, who

lived in it, had a very hard matter to keep themselves from committing suicide in the green-room, where tall looking-glasses, before which sprightly ballet-girls had used to posture, only revealed with greater force the nakedness of the place. Perhaps the reason for these two old guardians still remaining in the land of the living was, that the fireman was an Independent Dissenter of gloomy views, and that he comforted the door-keeper by a reflection on the fact that the haunt of the wicked, by whom, and in which, they both got their living, was not doing its customary evil. But, in good report or evil, the whitened door-step and bright fire of the comfortable little cupboard in which the door-keeper sat, enlivened and shone out upon the passers-by, and cheered many of those who were bold enough to enter the theatre with the view of taking it.

When, however, the strangers passed the door-keeper's room, and the gloomy fireman took them in tow, all brightness vanished, and the aspirant for the honours of bankruptcy was checked in his career. Indeed, the Independent Dissenter, as he called himself, might have justly prided himself

on having checked many a man on his road to ruin. He was, however, not a match for the Warlock, who, one fine morning, after having poured into himself and one of his friends a considerable amount of whiskey overnight, bore cheerfully down upon the door-keeper as he sat upon his worn-out porter's chair and gazed upon his newly whitened door-step.

"Well, Mr. Barnes," said the Warlock, cheerfully, "how is everybody and everything? Theatre still on hand?"

"Why, yes," drawled Mr. Barnes; "and likely to be. I get 'em pretty cheerful as to prospects when they come in here; but, Lor' bless you! when Hardman goes behind with 'em he soon chokes 'em off."

"Does he, now?" said the Warlock; "and a pretty useful sort of a servant he is. He would not choke me off, I know that. I mean to take the theatre."

"Lor' bless me!" said the door-keeper, looking very serious. "I don't think that will do, nohow; I don't imagine so, myself, and I ought to know pretty well what it is to keep a theatre. Wizards and

warlocks ain't no good, and the only witches that are worth anything are the witches in 'Macbeth.' Curious, ain't it? but so it is. Theatrical public very funny—many people don't understand 'em, but I do. Besides," concluded honest Mr. Barnes, "it is a fall for one of the old patent houses to go into the hands of a warlock."

The conjurer looked at Barnes the door-keeper from the top of his fur cap to the bottom of his somewhat rusty boots with a quiet surprise, and then began to whistle. After he had finished a bar, his offended dignity was soothed, and he said, "Nevertheless, I mean to have the theatre, Mr. Barnes. Where's Hardman? I should like to see in what state it is."

"You'll find him pottering about in front, sweeping one of the saloons," said Barnes, muttering something about a beggar on horseback. Nevertheless, he pulled the spring which opened the door, and the Warlock proceeded.

"Such a musty, dusty, fusty concern," said the conjurer to a friend, afterwards, "perhaps, was seldom seen; but very little pays me, you know.

Hardman evidently wanted to get away from me and sing psalms, but I would not let the old fool, and chaffed him nicely. What a stupid old fellow it is! Does he think I shall bring the devil there with my conjuring tricks?"

In spite of Messrs. Barnes and Hardman, who, from two very different motives, both agreed in their opposition to the Warlock, that gentleman secured the Theatre Royal, Brydges Street. True to his own interests, the Warlock spent very little money in cleaning or repairing it behind the scenes; but before the curtain he made, by a judicious distribution of gay cloths and papers, with a little Dutch metal which passed for gilding here and there, everything look clean and gay enough. On the walls of London the Warlock was a greater man than anywhere else in the world. His coloured posters attracted, with their powerful fascinations, little Billy, Tommy, and Jemmy; and his free admissions, given with much judgment, but much greater profusion, delighted all those industrious shopkeepers who exhibited his bills. For the first two or three weeks even the Warlock

made little impression upon the hard hearts and tried heads of the Londoners; and so he remarked. But Mr. Skittles, who had become very stout and red-faced, twirled his leech-like moustache with great vigour, and kept up the patience of his chief by telling him how many appeals were daily made to the heads and hearts of those excellent citizens.

"Why," said the treasurer, "here are three heavy tragedians, a melodrama with five murders, two balloons, a rope-dancer, a man what is not a man and may be easily taken for a monkey, the Spanish dancers, and the ladies and gentlemen who are not Spanish dancers but who pretend to be so, a famous preacher who performs in a music-hall——"

"Oh, leave off—do," said the Warlock. "I know all about 'em pretty well, I think."

"No, you don't, if you're dissatisfied. I ain't half done yet. I've said nothing about the comedians, the comic men, the music-halls, and the penny gaffs. Now, think what a stomach the Londoners must have to digest all that. It is true there are fifty thousand people as visitors

fresh every day, and at least as many more seeking for amusement; but I fancy we have our pick pretty well. So keep up, old hoss."

The "old hoss" did keep up, and, to give him due credit, never lost heart before the public, although a long time had elapsed before he brought back his money. At last, as he said, it came "tumbling in," and his treasurer was fully occupied and satisfied. But through all the dull season the indefatigable and courageous Warlock conjured rabbits into hats and sackfuls of feathers out of them, was great in his gun-trick, took little children out of a drawing-room table, and live geese, cats, and dogs out of his magic portfolio. His carpet-bag he filled with cannon-balls, and the hats of his visitors with plum-puddings. Moreover, he was as generous with his presents as ever. He gave away bonbons and gilt crackers to children, who came in with orders by the dozen. It was all give and little "receive," as he said, for the first few weeks. He fed the people with good things, as well as giving them free admission to his theatre. He cut liberal slices of his pudding for


the children of theatrical critics who abused him. He poured out bumpers of red, white, yellow, and black-looking wines for those who maligned him, and having got into his magic entertainment for nothing, thought very little of it. He served hot coffee, sweetened from bowls of the whitest sugar, to publicans and cigar-shopkeepers or their friends with as much urbanity and courtesy as if they had been princes of the royal family. At last liberality began to pay and long patience was rewarded: the Warlock's magic hall was crowded with visitors who paid, his expenses were fully recouped, and he pocketed no small sum; but, it must be owned, he still wanted to make more.

"It would be easy," said he to Skittles, "to make all our stage look clean and pretty with pink and white calico; and what a ball we could give! By the way, I will bet a sovereign Stannard will call on us soon: he is back from America, and he can't keep from the old haunts. I saw the back of him and caught a glimpse of his side-face as I drove down here."

"Did you, by jingo?" cried the treasurer.

"Ah," said the wizard, "if he would only come here and draw up an address to the public, I would give him five guineas for it. He knew how to hit it for me, that he did. I wish he would come in; but perhaps he won't now, for he is a rich man, I'm thinking. He looked so. However, whether he comes or not, we will have a *bal d'opéra* or *bal masqué* on a prodigious scale for my benefit. That will be a crusher. We must call it by a French name, because it gives a zest to it. English people cannot bear their own language used when they can manage to understand another. So let us have a *bal d'opéra*, and let us make it a fizzer."

The treasurer agreed that it was to be "a fizzer," and entered willingly into the plans of his chief; and to this farewell benefit ball of the wizard I purpose taking the reader, because thereat he may chance to meet several persons in this true story.



CHAPTER XII.

MASQUERADING.

THE Warlock was right: Stannard had returned to this country a rich man. There is a proverb that ill-gotten gains never prosper; but, like many old proverbs, it is true only in part. Ill-gotten gains do certainly increase; and if increase of riches be prosperity, which our good doctor on one side and Father Gargle on the other did most strenuously deny, then Stannard might have been said to have flourished like the very greenest of bay-trees. In six short years he was a rich man, and just at that period of life, too, when men better than he can only just begin to think of saving a little money for their old age.

Still he was unhappy. It was not that the "thief doth fear each bush a constable," because Herbert Stannard knew that he was so well hedged round by concurrent circumstances that to prove anything against him would be difficult indeed. But the fact was the devil had outwitted him, and he had fallen in his own esteem just for nothing. Had he continued for a few months at Mr. Brawl's beck and call, he would have earned that money honestly which he had gained dishonestly. He was utterly ashamed of himself; for his nature was as proud as it was weak. He could no longer look the world in the face with the proud impetuosity of the true Bohemian; and he felt that, had he been at Liverpool with his American friend without a penny in his pocket, he could have made the same arrangement and terms with him as he did with the ill-gotten gains he had about him in sovereigns and bank-notes.

He had proof of this. On board ship, his active, restless, unhappy mind wanting employment, he had indulged in blind-hookey and other exciting games of cards prevalent between decks, and had

lost every penny. Then he had sworn a great oath never to touch cards again and to save his money, and his New York friend stood nobly by him, and in the new country they had prospered in almost every undertaking. A great passion for money-making had thus grown up; and it must be said, let others talk as they like, that the art of money-making, when once well understood, is by no means a difficult one to practise. Having funded his money, and being, as the reader has been told, a rich man, Stannard had an insatiable desire to return to this country and to seek out and find his wife.

"She will care for me now," he said, "that proud woman. Women care only for gold. I have plenty: what will she say to me?"

An agent to whom he now and then despatched a handsome sum for Safta had kept him pretty well informed as to her movements. The young actress, too, had been somewhat successful; so much so, that a less ambitious woman would have been proud and satisfied; but Safta thought nothing gained till the very summit of the mountain of

fame had been reached. London presents charms to all such ambitious people. To Safta the approbation and applause of Edinburgh, Liverpool, and Manchester audiences were sweet, but a success in the great Metropolis would have been a thousand times sweeter. She had, therefore, determined to come up to town to confer with her agent as to an engagement; but when she arrived she found that the legitimate drama was looking down in the world, and that little or nothing, in fact, remained open to her. One of the great theatres was shut up, and the other—horrible to relate to all histrionic artists—was doing a flourishing business under the sole guidance and with the attraction of the Warlock of the South. Two gentlemen were, however, very anxious to see her, although she, as yet, knew nothing of the interest they displayed. One was the notorious Captain Tophill, who, without one-sixth of his original fortune, was endeavouring to live at as great a rate as with the whole of it; and the other was her husband, who, of the two, was now indeed the richer man.

Miss Safta lived in a grand old street in Bloomsbury, in which healthy but somewhat fallen quarter she had taken lodgings; and she had been so far unsuccessful in securing an engagement that, not to lose time, she had written only a few days before to a provincial manager, telling him that her services were at his disposal. In the meantime, to amuse herself, as well as to study her profession, Madame went very frequently to the theatres; and, although her husband had shown himself pretty frequently at these places of entertainment, she had been lucky or unlucky enough not to have met him. Although he had lived in America under a feigned name, rumours of his success, or of that of a person very much like him, had reached her, and she had taken the money sent her without compunction, as, indeed, she would have done had she known that it came from a less legitimate source.

The Warlock's preparations being ready, and certain daily and evening papers duly paragraphed with notices of the expected brilliance of the *bal*, the town was said, by some of the most enthusiastic

newspaper-writers, to be on the "tip-toe of expectation," as, indeed, if we believe all, it generally is when new novels of certain authors, and new translations from the French by certain playwrights, are to come before it. As Safta was about to leave town, she was very naturally anxious to go to the ball; and therefore when a mysterious note, containing an order for one of the best private boxes in the Warlock's theatre, was sent her, she was by no means sorry to receive it. Her heart had been for some time softening towards her husband, and she was not indisposed to believe the order had been sent her through his agency; perhaps, for the sake of good fellowship, by the Warlock himself. So it was quite natural that the fair *tragédienne* determined to honour society and the great Warlock by "countenancing"—elegant Americanism!—his *bal d'opéra*.

What charm there is in a masked ball, as understood in England, it is difficult to say. Hope deferred has the reputation of making the heart sick; and surely the hope of seeing one of those wild, fantastic, brilliant assemblages of persons we all



dream of as the *beau-idéal* of a masquerade must have died from the hearts of most of us. Nevertheless the most dull and stupid places of entertainment can manage to create an excitement by announcing a masquerade. No sensible person, however untaught or vulgar he may be—and sense can exist without culture—ever puts on a masquerade dress. He merely goes to see others make fools of themselves; and, under the slight disguise of a nose of enormous proportions and extravagant colour, or a black mask, sold by a blackguard, who will persist in thrusting it like a play-bill in at the cab window, he is contented to hide his identity. When he arrives thereat he finds that the fancy dresses are by far outnumbered by black coats, and that gloomy faces look down upon the few merry little figures of ballet-girls and “professionals” who are paid or cajoled into giving the vast space a slight dash of vivacity. There is a general feeling of shamefacedness among the company. Smith, of the Temple, passes Jones, of Baker Street, with a grin upon his pasty countenance, and blushes redly as he says, “Hang

that man! who would have thought of meeting him here? he will tell of my whereabouts to all Baker Street." Jones tries to hide his confusion by slipping on his black mask, which, having only sufficient space for a small nose, resolutely refuses to fit Jones's Roman organ. Brown, a shopman of Regent Street, meets his very serious employer. The medical student, by prescriptive right being there, runs up against his "grinder," who thinks it "all a lark," and, though he is fifty, tries to feel like a boy. Artists of illustrated papers, writers of novels, and newspaper men meet each other, and give each other to understand, with a mild joke, that they are studying life; and the wisest of them, getting tired of what they know "to be complete idiotcy"—these gentlemen deal in very strong language—hurry off to a social club, and spend the rest of the evening with a friend and a cigar. Truth cannot be wholly "burked" even by its most cunning enemy, good-nature. In the morning, accounts of the gay and festive scene appear, which are much less interesting than the account of a funeral; and the English are taunted by a

comparison with the French, called by the writer "our lively neighbours over the water;" and the quotation from Laurence Sterne, "They do these things better in France," is trotted out for the eight thousandth time.

All these dulnesses, silly frivolities, and absurdities were to be done away with by the Warlock. He informed the British public that he "knew not the word 'fail;'" and as every blank wall asserted this in the loudest, because the largest type, half of the British public believed it, and a very fair proportion of that public incontinently went and bought tickets. There, therefore, really was, without exaggeration, a great deal of expectation in certain circles about this great ball.

The rose-coloured and scented envelope which enfolded Safta's ticket called from her fair eyes some attention. She was rather puzzled at the handwriting, and failed to recognise it, and her active mind was busied with this question as she dressed. She paused as she knotted up her fine and abundant hair, and, looking in the glass fixedly, became aware how much absorbed and

preoccupied she was that evening. She saw that time had fixed and hardened many expressions on her still beautiful face : she thought of her waywardness, her petulance with her husband, and questioned herself whether her duty would not have been better fulfilled if she had won that wayward and weak, but affectionate young man. "Poor fellow!" she muttered, as she thought of the last interview she had with him : "how I must have wounded him. If I had a chance now of retrieving that which is past, should I take it? I think I would; indeed I do."

Bidding adieu to these unaccustomed and moody thoughts, she laughed, rather sadly, perhaps, and tossed her opera-cloak over her shoulders; and as she did so the tassels became entangled with the gold chain of her locket, and pulled out from her bosom a little miniature of her husband. Yes, this perverse woman, who hated and despised the man she was tied to—at least, so she had often told him—had a miniature of the clever, handsome face we first met with at the beginning of this tale. Perhaps the fact that the real and the ideal were,

in her imagination, so far apart, will account for the apparent contradiction. As she looked upon this portrait, old feelings returned fresh and healthy, and she vowed, should she ever have a chance, to retrace her footsteps, and to fall upon her husband's neck and beg his pardon. Luckily or unluckily for him, that restless young man, with a whitened face, with two brilliant patches on his cheek-bones, and his mouth painted "out" to an unnatural width, was putting on the dress of a clown, in which very efficient disguise he intended to visit the "gay and festive scene and the halls of dazzling light" provided for the public by his friend the Warlock.

"They will never know me in this dress, those Bohemian blackguards," said he, proudly, to himself. "She will be there; for I find that she has no country engagement, and she does not play in town. I can watch her; then, too, I can ascertain where she lives. Upon her reception of me depends my misery or happiness."

"The brougham's at the door, ma'am," said Safta's servant, familiarly announcing a carriage

which our ambitious and clever lady jobbed when she was in town. "You had better be quick, 'cos the coachman says that half the people in London are wild about this ball, and he wishes to be careful of his panels."

As Mrs. Stannard was quite as eager to go to the exciting scene as the coachman was to carry her, she attended to her maid without delay.

From Mrs. Stannard's lodgings in Great Coram Street to the Theatre Royal, Brydges Street, was not a long distance; but on this night it seemed unusually long. The weather, which had been warm and genial, had undergone a sudden change: it was one of those cold, wretched, sloppy nights when the weather does not seem to have made up its mind whether to rain or to snow, so makes a sort of compromise, which may be summed up in two words, namely, "slush" and "drizzle." It was an evening on which to put your feet on the fender, and declare nothing on earth should tempt you out. It was a sort of evening when City clerks arrived, dripping, by omnibus, at their suburban retreats, and insisted upon having some-

thing hot immediately; when bachelors of ill-regulated minds wrote mendacious notes about influenza, at the last moment, to the donors of slow evening parties; when Hansom cabmen plaintively supplicated for a *trink-geld*, in addition to their fare, on account of its being "such a nauful night;" when omnibuses were filled to repletion, and the mythical gentleman who is supposed to be always anxious to "get outside to oblige a lady" had been "inquired after," but was, in City parlance, as usual, "very shy;" when borrowed umbrellas are not returned, and mackintoshes and overalls are at a premium. In short, it was an evening that one would imagine it to be pressing business indeed which would induce man, woman, or child to venture out; and as for pleasure, it must be pleasure indeed to call them out in such inclement weather.

So thought Mrs. Safta, as she rode slowly along in that hired brougham, which smelt so of damp and mildew, and felt so cold and miserable. She could not help envying the people she saw up at the first-floor windows, with the lamps lighted, and the

fires blazing, and the partially drawn red curtains. Once, when there was a dead lock in the street, and a good deal of shouting and swearing, she put the window down to see what was the matter, and she could not help looking into a snug little room—she thought she never saw such a snug room—snug was the word. There was, she presumed, the proprietor of the room, a sturdy, well-grown young fellow, in an old coat, and smoking a short pipe; there was his snug little wife, who was just turning round from a little piano, whereat she had been playing; and, best of all, there was a snug little baby, who chirruped and crowed with delight as his father tossed him in his arms. That was a snug little scene, and even Safta could not help thinking about it, as her carriage left the street, and wishing, too, that she had left the dangerous, if ambitious career she had marked out for herself, and had settled quietly in some obscure but comfortable home.

A shouting, banging, hustling, crying out, pushing, shuffling, noisy mob at the carriage door, a hurry and flurry, a white glove at the end of a

black sleeve, which was put forward to help her out, and an adjuration to "look sharp," from the attendant policeman, as he banged to the brougham door and beckoned to the next carriage to drive up—all these combined brought back her thoughts to the business of the evening, the *bal d'opéra*. Under the solemn and dingy old portico she passed into a corridor, wherein some ball arrivals were fastening shoes, tying on masks, or placing before their handsome countenances those enormous noses, which are, from some latent cause, supposed to be funny. The box-keeper took her ticket, and Safta held her white silk mask before her face just as a clown, with a handsome, but most melancholy face, jumped out of a cab, deposited a huge wrap-rascal and hat with the keepers of those articles, pulled off an easy pair of shoes, which he gave to the man to put into his hat, and then, in true pantomimic costume, even to the hairy crest and comic slipper, bounded into the corridor, and hurried to the stairs which led on to the stage. A burst of music was wafted towards Safta as she followed

the attendant to her box, which was a large and handsome one, from which she could see all.

"Hallo!" said Brown, of Guy's Hospital, to Williams, of King's College; "here's a go—you, here. Did you see Joey pass just as that handsome gal went down? That's the clown at Astley's. Paid for the night, of course; and hard work, too. A capital fellow: we shall have such fun! I know him well enough, and we had better follow him."

"The clown from Astley's," said Safta to herself, as she sat in her box; "and he knows him. Well, I suppose I must have met him somewhere, for I am certain that I have seen those eyes before."

CHAPTER XIII.

THE END OF THE WARLOCK'S GREAT SPECULATION.

THOSE who have seen the *bal d'opéra* of Paris, of which the Warlock's was to have been rather a rival than an imitation, or who have assisted at any foreign masquerades, are apt enough, and not without reason, to laugh at our English masked balls. Let the Englishman be what he will—and that he is brave, generous, and industrious, only his bitterest enemies will doubt—he is not born to be an actor. Hence, to succeed, he labours at this art with all the pertinacity which belongs to him ; whilst others, born of more mercurial nations, jump at once into the socks of comedy or the buskins of tragedy. Although young English men

and women have as finely formed figures as any people, somehow they do not look well in fancy dresses; or as we know, from the epitaphs, all bad people are banished from graveyards, so all good figures seem studiously to avoid masquerades. Then, again, our islanders want gaiety and sparkle. They have humour and fun, and like to become boisterous; but that kind of "fun" is more fit for a bear-garden than a fancy ball. To the initiated, therefore, even the Warlock's great endeavour seemed dull; but to Mrs. Stannard, who had never seen anything of the sort before, it was simply enchanting. The sombre, deep-coloured hangings and cushions of the box formed an admirable foil to the *bizarre* and many-coloured crowd flitting before it.

For the first few moments there seemed such an odd jumble of colours that she could distinguish nobody, as they whirled madly past to the music of a soul-stirring galop, which the band were playing with admirable spirit as she first entered. As this, however, came to an end, and the heated and panting dancers promenaded slowly

round, she began to distinguish the characters, and to be able to pick out many of her histrionic and other acquaintance amongst them. First she saw that saucy little puss Amy Rosebud—in the ballet—dressed as a romp, or school-girl, or whatever the absurd character may be called. She wore a short petticoat and frilled trousers, and her flaxen hair was plaited in two tails and tied with blue ribbon. She carried a skipping-rope in her hand, with which she knocked on the back every man she met. “Absurd little thing!” said the grave Safta: “she ought to be well whipped and sent to bed.” Something similar to that of Miss Rosebud’s seemed to be a favourite costume with many of the young ladies. Then the *débardeur* appeared to be highly esteemed. There was a young girl dressed as a cavalier, a tall, bending, fragile thing, awkward and foolish, and who pulled off her mask on account of the heat, and whom Safta recognised as the daughter of a theatrical dressmaker. This young lady, a very demure person in private life, appeared in all the glory of a new Charles II. dress, with an extensive display of laced cambric

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frilling in the front of her shirt, a Vandyke collar, and yellow buff boots with imitation laced edges. She was leaning on the arm of a *beau sabreur*, who seemed stalwart and stupid, as too many of the *sabreurs* are.

One or two artists passed below, engaged in the exciting occupation of "chaffing" several other of the visitors in a harmless and mild way; for these students of nature are not very great in repartee, being for the most part a silent and an observant race. Little Scumbler, whose picture had been very well criticised on account of its intense devotional feeling, was paying his devotions (as *Postillon de Lonjumeau*) to a young lady with a gauze dress, silver wings, and a Rob Roy scarf, who no doubt thus indicated that she was a sylphid of Scotch extraction. The crowd of black coats was by far too great; nevertheless, the scene was a gay one, and made all the more gay by a frantic rush of a dozen professional people in showy dresses, headed by a pantomimist, who dressed as scenic artists always dress. The devil, in a green tight suit and scaly wings and tail, bounded over

the heads of the crowd and scrambled up the side of a box, wherein he was received with many shouts and much rejoicing. In this box sat the melancholy clown, having succeeded in making an entry some time before ; and between him and his Majesty there appeared to be discord ; for Joey, putting his hands on the edge of the box, which was only on the first tier, vaulted lightly over the side, and then, hanging by one arm for a moment, let himself fall lightly to the ground, and in a minute was lost amongst the crowd. Not to be outdone, and claiming some knowledge, perhaps, of the representative of Grimaldi, the fiend, after waving his pointed tail in defiance of the gaping crowd below, cried out to warn them to get out of his way, and made the same kind of exit : nay, so rapidly did he travel, partly over the heads of and partly through the crowd, that he would have caught up the object of his search had not Jack, the *beau sabreur*, caught him by his tail, and by sheer main force withheld the little pantomimist. Excelling in strength, and amid the shrieks of the audience, who, finding everything very dull,

were ready to enjoy themselves by any means, the *sabreur* endeavoured to pull the thin pantomimist, by his tail, upon his back ; nor did the theatrical fiend object to the arrangement, but hung down as if dead, until, with a spring and a bound, he clung round the *sabreur's* neck, pinched his throat till he nearly choked him, and, slapping his face with the flat sole of his pantomimic shoe, forced him to relinquish his tail, and bounded off amid the applause of the company.

"I thought you would get it, Jack," said a friend, as he presented the guardsman with his three-cornered hat, which had fallen in the struggle. "That's little Howler, the sprite. Bless you, he could jump down your throat."

A crowd of persons were now seen following two flower-girls, who pressed through the thick mass of loungers, while the masters of the ceremonies, tried hard to have a space cleared for a dance. The music again struck up a waltz ; and *vivandières* and *pierrots*, *débardeurs* and *débardeuses*, cavaliers and Spanish bull-fighters, English clowns (of whom there were two or three), midshipmen, barristers and,

brigands, flower-girls and postillions, soldiers, sailors, tinkers, and tailors, were soon engaged in a wild whirl; whilst a huge crowd of spectators, in masks and without masks, with long pasteboard noses, which passers-by delighted to pull off, stood staring on the panting, flying, and now and then shouting and whooping multitude. Safta sat gazing, and thinking that, after all, the *bal d'opéra* was an uncommonly dull matter merely to look at, when a bouquet was cleverly thrown from the hands of one of the crowd below into her box; and as she picked it up a note fell from the flowers, in which was written a few words of compliment (and assurance, in more senses than one), by which Safta was informed that her friend and admirer who had sent her the order for the box was no one less than Captain Tophill, and that she might expect a visit from that gallant gentleman himself, who hoped to have the pleasure of leading her down to supper in one of the more private saloons in the theatre.

Mrs. Stannard crumpled the note in disdain and threw it on the floor, and looked out again

on the crowd of dancers below, uncertain whether to go or stay. "Let him come," she said, at last, to herself: "I warrant that when he goes he will have a little of his dirty conceit taken out of him. Has he not sufficiently ruined himself, that he must be still haunting the theatre? Such men as he are a curse to our profession."

A slight crowd now gathered directly under her box, occasioned by a dispute between a fox-hunter and an Arab chief, the latter of whom, having violated the laws of his prophet and taken a great deal too much bad champagne, which was retailed at the buffets at a large price, was anxious to fight the fox-hunter, but was held back by a benevolent but vulgar person dressed as Robin Hood. The noise as well as the heat of the theatre rather disturbed Safta, who took her mask off and gazed with interest at the scene below; while she was quite unaware that by laying by her mask she attracted the interest of the melancholy clown, who had seen her pass in dressed and masked, and who had been causing much amusement to the "gents" below by earnestly watching

each box in the house, nay, figure which entered it, through a beautiful little opera-glass made of gold and tortoiseshell.

The crowd below gesticulated so loudly, and interested Safta so deeply, that she hardly heard the box door open, and was only aware that some one was with her from the fact that a gentleman spoke to her in a rather husky voice, telling her, as she turned round in surprise, that she looked charming.

Safta stared proudly indignant in answer to this, but bowed slightly to the captain. She had not forgiven him for the unceremonious way in which she had been *chasséd* from his theatre; but she was too much a woman of the world to openly quarrel with one who might at any time offer a lucrative engagement. It is astonishing to think of the number of rebuffs that people will endure when they proceed from those from whom they are receiving a large salary.

"This box, then, was from you, Captain Tophill," she said: "had I known it before, I am afraid I should have declined it."

The captain was, as he would have phrased it, "a little sprung;" that is, he had taken, in company with many young persons from the opera and ballet, who knew and surrounded him, too much of the sparkling champagne sold in the theatre. His voice was thick, and his eyes lighted up with a peculiar glow when he answered.

"Would you, indeed, madam? Why, we are getting up in the world, and a little proud; not too proud to accept a box from a mere stranger, though. Well, well, it's the way with you all: you women are rare tyrants over us men."

The little man looked worse for wear, older and shabbier, than he did six years before. Although at a ball whereat the smallest "gent" would have figured in a clean shirt, the captain's collar was frayed and worn. He had been dining with some of his hangers-on, and was red, greasy, and dirty, and altogether cut a by no means pretty figure in the eyes of the woman whom he wished would become enamoured of him.

"Yes," he continued; "you tyrannize over us pretty freely—pretty freely. I'll tell you what it

is, now," he said, clearing his voice, passing his dirty fingers through his rough hair, and speaking in as insinuating a tone as he was capable of assuming; "I am making up a first-rate company—none but first-rates, you know. I watched your name getting up pretty well, and I want you to lead in London: that's the place."

"London is the place," said Safta, taking the bait, "and I am anxious to appear here; but I have just sent down to Edinburgh my acceptance of an engagement."

"Well," said the captain, sitting in the chair next to her, and becoming more confidential, "we must break that engagement. I am not a man to be thwarted in my schemes, I can tell you. Break through it, and I'll fight your cause. By the way, how did you like the flowers? This is a pretty scene, is it not?"

The captain leaned forward so as nearly to touch her cheek, and at the same time let his arm fall with seeming accident from the back of her chair to round her waist. Safta sprang up indignantly.

"Captain Tophill," she said, "shall I call my

husband? I never excuse such liberties. Unhand me."

"Don't you, my dear?" grinned the little captain, hissing out his words savagely—"don't you? then you are used to them, I suppose. I know your cunning pretty well, I do, and the cunning of your sex."

There was such an impudent grin upon the little fellow's face that Safta's rage knew no bounds, and she sprang from him to the farther end of the box, leaving her opera-cloak in his hands. "If you come a step nearer, you drunken fool, you——" she said; but before she had time to conclude she was arrested by mingled howls and shrieks of fun, merriment, and terror, from the crowd below, and a cry of "Fire! fire! fire!"

"Hush!" she said. "Give me that; be still, and listen." She snatched the cloak from him and held up her finger.

A shout of laughter from below, of jeers, oaths, and ribaldry, came up, as if the vast crowd had taken the cry as a mere attempt to clear the theatre; then came a pause, and again the cry

which made Safta's heart stop in its beating and her flushed cheek turn pale.

"It's only those fools below," said the captain, upon whom his repulse, the champagne he had swallowed, the wine at and the brandy-and-water after dinner, began to tell heavily—"It's only those fools below, my dear, amusing on themselves. It's a jolly lark, to get the theatre half empty: no readmissh'n." It was a long word, and he stumbled over it. "You don't go out, I know."

The drunken fool had managed to get between the door and Safta, and held the handle. The cries now became louder and louder; the masters of the ceremonies ran in among the confused crowd and begged them to be quiet; but above their heads flames darted out of the ceiling, while an acrid smell of smoke spread amongst the people, creeping into the boxes, filling the galleries and lobbies, and choking those who breathed it.

"Zumthin's a-burnin'," said the drunken captain; "a piece o' German tinder, no doubt. What a row they do kick up! Now just give us a kiss,

Safta, and be quiet. We're very comf'ble here, I'm sure."

Frantic with fear, Safta sprang on him and endeavoured to pull him from the door; but the little wretch seemed endowed with more than ordinary strength, and caught her round the waist and held her hard. She could hear in that brief moment all the varied sounds of fear and folly, bravado and cowardice, which came from the mingled crowd below. People leaped from the lower boxes, finding the stairs impassable; some wept, others shrieked; some bound white handkerchiefs over their mouths, through which to breathe the smoky atmosphere; others ran hither and thither without any reason but by the mere impulse of fear; some stood to marshal others the way out, and by the good sense and bravery of these the theatre was being quickly cleared. Cavaliers and clowns struggled in the crowd, carrying fainting ladies; masks were pulled off, and dresses frantically thrown away; and still, amid the desperate crowd, arose the more desperate cry.

"Captain! idiot! brute! we only shall be

burnt to death!" shouted Safta, as if such a death were more horrible when alone.

"By —," maundered the captain, "can't she act well when she likes! If she only did like that every night, she would be worth a hundred a week. I will have a kiss, if I die for it."

The drunken fellow let go the door, and tried to clasp Safta more tightly, when it was burst open from without, and a clown with frantic haste and a strong arm struck him to the ground.

"Save me! save me!" cried Safta, running to him and throwing her arms round him—"save me from him—that drunken brute."

"I have come to do it," said the clown, his eyes glaring wildly through his white paint. "We are in time yet: I know a secret way to the box-office, which is uncrowded. Who is it?"

Safta knew the voice, and muttered a silent prayer. "You know him," she said. "This is the first time I have seen him for years. It is Captain Tophill."

The captain, during this hurried speech, had had time to pick himself up, and, with face red

and flushed, and dishevelled hair, looked dreadful in his wrath. "Oh, I see," said he to Safta; "you will lead me on, will you, and then call in your——"

"It's he!" cried the clown. "Rush out of the door to the left, Safta; bind your handkerchief over your mouth: I have a little account here to settle with the captain."

Cool and collected, and quick as lightning, the triangular red spots on his whitened cheeks almost glittering in their brilliancy and the lurid light, the clown, no other than Herbert Stannard, passed his wife out of the box, turned her, frightened and dismayed as she was, in the right direction, and whispered, "Down the first stairs; at the bottom there is a door: wait there."

Hurriedly she sped away through the smoke and the few flying figures about her, and reached the door in safety.

As Stannard again entered the box the captain, having armed himself with a chair, rushed at him.

"That's your game, is it?" cried the clown, dodging the blow and hitting out from the elbow.

"You've played long with my feelings: here is a short reckoning."

The blow took effect, the captain's face became deluged with blood, and he fell heavily on a chair.

"Ah, I have not done yet," cried the clown, taking his assailant by the throat and shaking him till his teeth rattled and his tongue protruded. "Take that, and that, and that."

He struck him right and left on face and chest, and then, lifting him up as he would have lifted a child, flung him, a dead weight, on the floor.

The door he then threw open, and the smoke poured from the corridors into the box. He found himself alone. Creeping almost on all-fours, he bounded along like a hare, and was soon by the side of his wife, who, trembling and in tears, could not open the door.

"Be calm, Safta," said he: "I am here; I will save you."

He turned the handle and led her to a stone passage, where the cold fresh air blew upon her, and where she felt she might be out of danger, and then she fainted. Quickly he bore her out, and soon

reached the street, where the whole space seemed paved with upturned faces, lighted up with a lurid light from the burning theatre.

A shout greeted them ; a shout spreading from mouth to mouth. "Bravo!" cried one ; "these are the last ! They are all safe now."

"No," said the clown, with a savage gleam on his pale face ; "I left one man in a drunken sleep in a box. Who'll fetch him?"

There was a yell from the crowd as several men rushed forward ; but a strong line of police forming quickly round the building, and pressing into their service all who were strong and willing to assist, drove back the eager crowd.

"Back, for your lives !" some shouted : "here come the engines !"

There was a trampling of horses' feet, a rush, a roar of many voices, and then the rattle of many buckets and chain harness, the fall of ladders, the splashing of water, the hurrying to and fro of busy men still pushing back the crowd and out of disorder creating order. The red curtains of the long corridors of the Theatre Royal, Brydges Street, shone out with

the fiery brilliancy of a carbuncle ; then a sheet of flame appeared behind them, and the glass burst and cracked, and rattled down a storm of glittering hail, and the forked flames leaped out and rushed up to the sky.

Stannard had by this time hurried his fainting wife to a cab which was wedged in on the edge of the crowd, and, placing her inside, stood by the driver on the box.

"Quick—as quick as you can go," said he. "Turn up Long Acre—we can get through there—to Brown's Hotel, Dover Street. Quick—quick!"

The driver urged his horse, but it was at a snail's pace, through the thickly wedged crowd. The light of the burning theatre lighted up the whole street; the windows seemed alive with faces; women and children in their night-dresses, or with shawls tied hastily round them, looked out upon the crowd and cheered as it cheered. Gay costumes, feathers, velvet and gold lace, the dresses of the maskers, dotted the crowd here and there. The regular pumping of the engines was heard above the shouting; the hissing of the water,

as it fell upon the flames in tiny and powerless jets, was again heard above that; and from the burning mass arose clouds of smoke, now blue, now rose-colour, then a lurid red, as they took colour from the burning material below. Through these clouds again jetted up puffs of white steam, as the water, which fell with such little effect, was turned into vapour and given again to the sky; and by its side showers of sparks as brilliant as those from a rocket every now and then went upwards. Above all was heard—above the pumping, shouting, and struggling, even above the wild cheer when some brave firemen placed a ladder to a window and bore down a fainting human creature—the roar and rush of the fire; whilst, above the steam and sparks and clouds of smoke, there seemed to be a vast dome of molten copper, polished, lurid, and red, the reflection from the havoc below.

“Ah!” said the driver, in a hoarse whisper, as he turned the head of his poor nag and took a last look at the grand yet fearful illumination: “poor old theatre! Many a great man has come out there; many a great actress too. I’ve known her,

man and boy, these twenty years, and never thought to see the last of her. Will they save her, sir, do you think? Many's a fare I've driven to her doors, though I never went inside myself. Do you think they'll save her?"

"Drive on," said the clown, angrily—"Drive on—the night is cold—and then come back and see. Save her!" he muttered beneath his teeth. "The meddling fool, he's met his fate at last. The question is, will they save *him*?"

CHAPTER XIV.

A CHANGE FOR THE BETTER.

TRULY with a wounded heart to nurse and a fretted temper to cure—and even those angels whom man almost worships under the form of woman bear about them those little defects—a convent or retreat will, with all its spiritual attractions, grow somewhat dull and tiresome. Young ladies who are attracted to these romantic establishments should think over this. It may be all very well, this routine serving of Heaven, this vowing and binding, this cut-and-dried system of asceticism, for the first few weeks, but when one has to endure it for a whole lifetime it becomes a very serious thing. It becomes a spiritual suicide; for by it we cut away

all chances of coming out into the world to do our fellow-creatures service, and we separate ourselves from those who love us and those who hate us equally. The monks of Brahma exceed us also in their ascetic life of devotion, which is an unpleasant matter for a Christian Ultramontane to think of; and in the best-regulated of these retreats, since human hearts are taken in with them, there are quarrels, slanders, backbitings, and jealousies. We are fools, to think that whilst we live we can escape the world or escape the flesh! to imagine that we can fetter human nature and bind the mind, if we chain the tongue! I have been through a prison wherein no man had a name; where human face, save that of the gaoler or a chance visitor, was never seen, for the prisoners all wore masks; where human voice was forbidden, save when, in his despair and under penalty of much punishment, some poor wretch shrieked out for the pleasure of hearing himself; and yet, all the prisoners understood each other, and a desperate conspiracy—if, with regard to the true meaning of the word, we can so call it—was divulged by some

prisoner who thereby hoped to gain reward. How had this been accomplished? Did the prisoners speak with their ears? Were they like mesmeric patients? could they listen with their toes and hear with their chests? How are we to know? These strange facts come out every day to astonish us. We may well believe, then, that, after the first gush of warm enthusiasm is over, there are a thousand little tricks played in these homes, retreats, or convents, of which we know hardly anything.

Something of such little gossip, envy, hatred, and malice crept occasionally among the meek sisters, and perhaps turned Emmy's heart away from them. Nor did she, in good truth, wholly love her own sex. There are some women who do not. Some, indeed! Are there any who do? Do they not all love power, and in their hearts worship, and admire, and wish to be men? They will band together and, pretty creatures, grow wild-hearted and savage in their talk against us; but they secretly envy us the fact of our manhood, and would, as true women, rather be with and of the men than amongst their own sex, although they do

talk in America about the superiority of woman. Accustomed to the clear, strong will of her husband, and, before marriage, to the refined intellect of her father, a man who had seen much of the world and its ways and manners, the society of the sisterhood, with its ascetic method and its selfish devotion, did not please Lady Somers. Moreover, a great change was, and for some time had been, growing upon her. Her heart was newly opened : instead of repelling, it would attract ; it wanted something to cling to and to love.

Our heroine could not unbosom this to Father Gargle ; for she never confessed, and held aloof from binding herself too much to the faith of the good priest ; but she told it to Sister Martha, and through it, very probably, brought back that estimable little woman to the world. So they two entered into friendship—a friendship as pure, as warm, and as romantic as that of girls, and, to tell the truth, about as selfish too. For a time this was pleasant enough. Sister Martha had to relate her history, between prayers, in the sanatorium, and in all sorts of by-ways and corners, to Sister

Agatha; and, as that had been done thoroughly and without reserve, Sister Agatha "reciprocated," as our friends on the other side of the great waters term it. There was some portion of downright pride about Emmy, and therefore she did not condescend to do this until after a long struggle with herself; but at last she did do it, and she was glad when it was over.

"Do you know, Martha," said Emmy, when they were, one day in the now warm and genial spring, walking round the old-fashioned and quaint garden—"do you know that I think that what we have done is what is really meant by confession? 'Confess your faults one to another'—not to a priest, dear; not even to our good Father Gargle."

"Hush!" said the little sister, beaming all over her pretty little oval face with confidence and love. "Don't say a word against him or this house, my dear. I'm sure it has been a haven and a home to me. What a blessed thing it would be—would it not?—if we never spoke of the evil, but only said what good we knew of each other!"

“What a very little we should talk!” said the unconverted Emmy, with a sigh. The poor lonely heart was itself now: the other had filled itself with sympathy and love.

The replication of her friend gave some little pause to Sister Martha, and set her for a moment thinking. Nay, such is the power of sudden repartee, that the bright little face grew somewhat sad for a moment, no doubt made so by the reflection that there was a great deal of half-truth in Emmy’s rejoinder. At last the sun came out again on the poor, thin, but bright countenance, and Martha resolutely answered—

“Well, I am sure I don’t think so. Look around us. Idle tongues may speak, outside in the world, of the ambition and folly, or even the hypocrisy, of Father Gargle; but we who know him, what shall we say? We might talk a great deal about his goodness, his purity, his devotion, his humbleness and kindness of heart. Then there are our friends here——”

“There are, indeed,” said her companion, with a weary sigh, as if she were rather tired of them.

"Such friends as they are here!" And the lady gave a toss to her head as she spoke.

"And what shall we say of them," said Martha—"what but that which is good? We have known them early and late at their prayers, possessing many Christian virtues, meek, charitable——"

"Except when they look spiteful at one another on cold mornings at matins. Poor things! I don't wonder at it," said our incorrigible little friend: "I dare say they hate this gloomy old house, these dreary high walls, this quiet country, and this precise garden, without a blade of grass or the petal of a flower out of place. If they don't, I do; I hate it."

She spoke with unusual energy, and her eye flashed as she drew herself up. Emmy had grown more beautiful than ever; her face had become more regular, calm, and thoughtful; and in six years of quiet the young mother seemed to have regained her first youth: she looked but a girl, a girl fully grown and developed, as she stood by the slight, worn, and bent figure of the elder lady, Sister Martha.

"You can fly from it," said Martha, with a gentle sigh. "You can go back to happiness and the world : I never can." Emmy was touched by her tone, and stooped to kiss her. "And believe me, dear," Martha continued, "that when you have gone back, as I know you will, I shall often think of you, and love you, and pray for you too."

"You will be happier far than I ever shall be," said Lady Somers, rather gloomily; "indeed, I hope you will."

"Yes ; perhaps so ; a different sort of happiness, dear. You were born to be a wife and mother, and a happy one. It is different, I think, with me. You, in the course of nature, became a widow ; but cruelty and want of love, such as I have known, are against nature. But to return to our talk. How good and charitable—I say it again—all our dear sisters are : how kind they have been to me in my illness. Let us hope that you will never be ill enough to experience their goodness, but that you may learn it in some other way. Then, to turn to our own story, how good your husband was, how honourable, and different to other men."

"Indeed he was," thought Emmy, but coldly. The words did not, as they used once to, wake a chord of deep feeling in her breast. She was angry with herself for feeling so, but it was impossible to help it : she felt that her love was dead. "Dead, dead, dead!" she repeated to herself, with fixed, dry eyes, staring at the garden wall. "Ah, how wicked am I! Why does not the old love come back again? If I had died, he would have still loved on, and for ever."

"And then that good doctor : I can see him as you describe him and as I know him. I know why he has that wandering look now : he loves you, Sister Agatha ; and you should tell him where you are. You may depend that for six long years he has been searching for you. He will find you some day yet. Let me only give him a hint. Continue to come to my little room, and I will continue to be dangerously ill, if only on purpose to send for him. Father Gargle has great faith in him ; and yet, why has he not told him? But, by the way, I dare say the doctor has never asked him : this is the last place wherein he would dream

you could hide. We generally never find easily the thing which is under our very nose. Do let me give him the hint."

"Hush!" said Emmy; "you must not talk so: it is treason against my dead love." But although Emmy quieted her friend, she could not quiet her heart. That beat as eagerly as ever, and beat more at the thought of seeing the quiet middle-aged doctor than at seeing again her own son, the child of Felix and herself. The love which the little lady had for this little son had rather decreased than increased. She had heard how he was petted and made much of, how fond he had grown of his foster-mother and also of Lotty Morton, and how the great Earl Broadacres took him out with him, and was almost always with him in the park or fields, and a bitter-sweet jealousy had grown up in the heart of the mother towards the child. But for Keith Morton a curious feeling had arisen: his goodness, cleverness, and amiability seemed for the first time to be truly known to Emmy. She thought of him as the friend of her husband, who had stood by her in her trouble, and who had, throughout

that terrible time of loss, doubt, and dismay, still stood by her, and who alone had professed belief in her truth; for even when her quick eyes had detected a latent doubt in the eyes of two of her own sex—Lotty and Mrs. Lapis—the clear blue eyes of the doctor shone with trust and faith. And now he, above all those who should, for their own honour, and for the love they bore her husband, have been seeking her—he alone sought her, sorrowing, and perhaps in tears. As she remembered this a delicious feeling crept again into her bosom. It was the first faint pulsations of a nascent love. The lonely heart was no longer alone.

Sister Martha, who had not these feelings, and may therefore be excused, perhaps, for feeling, even on that genial day, cold, chilly, and somewhat friendless, the fire of her charitable defence of the doctor having died down, tired by Emmy's silence, proposed to go into the house; and, hand in hand, the two convalescents went in, each musing curiously enough on the devotion and fidelity of the doctor.

The six years which had passed away had had

their effect upon most of the persons in our story. Some seemed to have been nearly stationary, others to have grown older, and some even to have grown younger. Amongst those with whom time had so wonderfully run backward were two old gentlemen, gentlemen of blood and ancient lineage—the Earl of Broadacres and Sir Crosbie Vivyan. The latter, on his Sussex estate, was continually superintending the erection of new cottages, model houses for the poor, and other improvements, and had grown so active that more than one of Dr. Juniper's patent legs had given way to old age in spite of the elastic and enduring nature of its materials. The gentle boy, now a stalwart young man, helped his father with a will and power which delighted him, and often recalled to him the time when, in their humble lodging at Somers Town, he spelt out on the carved badge the motto, "At spes, non fracta."

"It is a good motto, Sir Crosbie; is it not? You never let one morsel of hope die for want of nourishment, I know," said the son.

"Yes; and look at me now, and admire the

profound wisdom which I exercised. Here am I, an old Ulysses, returned to my Ithaca. My Penelope, poor soul," said he, solemnly, "has been under the ground for these many years; but my Telemachus is 'all alive, oh!' to comfort my old age. I underwent a few rough experiences, but I am all the wiser for them. What should I have done if I had given up the game, turned sulky, and died? What would have become of you?"

"Ah, what indeed, father!" said the son. "I've seen some queer things in my office, though, young as I am. There is a young fellow there who is a Christian Socialist, his brother being a lawyer; and his argument for a general division of all the land in the kingdom is that not half the true people have got their own estates. Some one else sits in their seats, and then, after a generation or two, the dispossessed ones forget it. He tells me that every lawyer knows one or two poor claimants to estates, rightful owners, perhaps, but who are not strong enough to maintain their rights. It's a queer world, is it not, father?"

"So it is, my boy, but a very beautiful one,"

said Sir Crosbie, looking towards the Surrey hills, which lay in the distance like a blue bank of clouds. "And, I say, what an appetite one's native air does give one! Are you ready for lunch, my boy? If so, there is some of that peculiar, hung beef, which the Warlock sent us. A good fellow that, but quite a Bohemian, born for the boards and the gas-lights. Well, I confess that when this old Ulysses" (here he spoke of himself in the third person) "was on his wanderings—when he was on the Continent, in fact—he found a good deal of pleasure amongst those people."

"Poor devils!" said the gentle boy, who, being known to be the son and heir of a baronet, was "asked out" to very good society, and, reasonably enough, in his good-natured youth, imbibed some of the notions of those who surrounded him—"Poor devils! it must be a hard life for those play-actors, tumblers, and *jongleurs*, living from hand to mouth, and, as a Frenchman said to me, always 'catching the devil by the tail' for a living."

"And what did he mean by that pretty saying?" asked Sir Crosbie.

: "Why, he meant, I take it," answered Sir Crosbie's son and heir, "that they had a precious hard matter to gain enough money to live; that it was a rare struggle for them; and so I dare say it is."

"There's no doubt of it," returned the father; "but that life has its pleasures. Is there not some enjoyment in shooting over a cover when the birds are shy, or fishing a wild stream where others have been before you?"

"You catch precious little fish and bring down few birds," returned the young fellow, "and you have a good deal of walking."

"That's the fun of it," cried Sir Crosbie. "You get exercise and amusement. A man who shoots birds by the hundred, merely for the sake of killing them for the London market, is a mere butcher—not a bit better than a butcher, by jingo! The true sportsman likes to walk a field, and loves the sport, not its results. So, too, with the true Bohemian. And, moreover, remember, my son, that the true gentleman despises no one. His breeding is best seen in his behaviour to his

inferiors. He does not despise actors or tradesmen; and, if he should grow poor, he still, even when he has to travel in France, keeps up his head and aspires to the old motto, 'Unbroken hope.' And now let us come in to luncheon."

The reader will perhaps understand the motive of Sir Crosbie in maintaining this little fiction of travels on the Continent or in France, which he referred to as undertaken some years ago by himself. Careless as he was of what work he himself did, he was anxious that his son should believe that not only the spirit of the motto had been kept up, but also that the honour of the family had been unsmirched.

CHAPTER XV.

THE DOCTOR'S CHARGE.

AMONGST those who had by no means grown younger, in the time which had elapsed, were to be reckoned Lady Amethyst and her companion Miss Nightley. Time had passed heavily with each of them; more so, perhaps, with the disappointed daughter of Lord Stormore and wife of the Honourable Andrew Bradstock than with her friend; a couple of not very fine or handsome children, with, as she said, plaintively, "no future before them," not adding much to the comforts of the lady. Miss Nightley was still with her, ready at any time to superintend the education of these younger scions of a noble

house, and, though partially defeated, still mistress of her situation, and, moreover, perhaps more than ever mistress of her employer; for the woman of business had very nearly succumbed to the woman of intrigue.

Andrew Bradstock, as he grew in years, had not improved. He was always in debt, in spite of his wife's management; and to be in debt is, even with a peer's son, to be in danger. What hope there was of his inheriting the splendid fortune of his father had grown, in his opinion, "small by degrees and beautifully less." Still, there was only one little life between him and it, and he did not feel at all grateful to Providence for protecting and prolonging that life. When he could obtain money he lived in London. His name, with Englishmen who worshipped the peerage without considering its value, was of some little weight as that of a director to speculative companies; and with the small and uncertain sums he could pick up by such means, as well as by visits to money-lenders and the gaming-tables, the honourable gentleman continued his uncertain career.

Many times, against his will, he took refuge in his father's house against importunate creditors ; and at such times his behaviour did not improve his wife's temper, who then had the unpleasant consequences of her marriage of speculation brought home to her most closely and unpleasantly.

"Don't you think, my dear," said Lady Amethyst to her companion, "that the doings of Andrew are enough to drive any one mad?"

"Yes, if any one chose to be fool enough to go mad about such a thing as a husband. I should not trouble myself about him. Let him be lodged in a debtor's prison, if he so will it: it is his own look-out, and not yours, my lady."

"His own look-out, but our disgrace. Besides, he would be, as we know, almost as expensive in a prison as out of one. They will not keep him for life, those creditors of his: we are obliged to come forward and rescue him. He has dipped my little fortune considerably, and his father, I am afraid, will not help him again. Why did I marry him? I am sure I have repented the deed every day of my life since."

“Hardly so bad as that, Amethyst,” said Miss Nightley, cheerily. “Things promised well, both before and after your wedding. It is true Lord Somers was alive then ; but there is always a good chance of a sporting and hunting man either shooting himself or breaking his neck. He kindly did the latter, to oblige you—it is true, not on the hunting-field, but the effect was very much the same both for you and for him, poor young man.”

“Umph !” ejaculated Lady Amethyst: “I don’t think you had need to waste any pity on him. He lived his life, and enjoyed it too, more than we women can, and he is dead. He has left behind him a worse and more certain bar to our prospects than his own life.”

“A bar that may not exist for ever—at any moment that may fall down and leave you with the clearest certainty of being the Countess of Broadacres. I have been looking into the statistics of births, deaths, and marriages lately ; though, why they should put the deaths before the marriages I don’t know ; perhaps because one-half of

the miserable little mortals born die before they are ten years old : will that comfort you ? ”

“ Not much. I suppose the greater part of those who die are the children of the poor ; and a good job too. Whatever is, is right there, without a doubt. But this little impediment, as you sometimes call it, has no chances against him. He lives in the most healthy part of England, he is carefully tended and nursed, and has the benefit of a physician, a resident physician, to attend him.”

“ And that physician is wise enough not to administer any of his own drugs,” said Miss Nightley, with a sneer.

“ I do not see why you should sneer at him,” retorted the lady, petulantly. “ Dr. Morton is a clever man, and he was certainly too much for us poor women, backed up as we were, too, by your aiders and abettors in London. What can a woman do when a man with a practised intellect is against her ? ”

“ Practised intellect of man ! ” returned the companion, rather rudely : “ practised fiddle-stick !

If circumstances had not been against us, we would have beaten them; and chances may occur which will throw the balance in our favour yet. There was something very mysterious about it altogether. While Lord Broadacres lives it is well not to open the scandal: he is too well satisfied with the bargain and accepts the marriage. But why is the woman conjured and spirited away? Who can swear to her identity? How do we know that Emma Everingham was the person named in the marriage certificate? and who, except the doctor, can attest the identity of this child? A sharp lawyer, at the death of the Earl, would rip up the whole matter, and blow such evidence to the winds."

"Would he, indeed?" asked Lady Amethyst, hopelessly. "You are by far too sanguine. Moreover, the Earl may live for twenty years yet—live until the child is a grown man and can defend himself; until he has himself caught up from his advisers a knowledge of the circumstances, and has been able to strengthen himself in possession."

"You argue against your own interests capitally, Amethyst," said the companion, gravely. "Well, if you like it to be so, let it be so. I have been studying the title-deeds of this great fortune lately, and I see another hope yet. Let me tell you that all their practised intellects will not beat me. I have still a trump-card in my hand. They can play and I can play. What if they did cheat us of a trick or two? What if we lost a poor hundred by a rogue, and gave another hundred to our agents in London for that which proved equally useless as our first purchase? We are not beaten, I can tell you, my lady. Our chance is not yet entirely dead."

"I am glad to hear you say so," returned Amethyst, carelessly; "but your words give me no hope. Your trump-card may be beaten: that doctor is a careful man, and will trump higher. I have a great opinion of him, I can assure you."

"And very little opinion of me, you mean to say? Well, don't let us quarrel: we know each other pretty well, and our falling out would do your cause no good."

Miss Nightley said this with the consciousness of one who had the mastery over her interlocutrix ; and Lady Amethyst felt it so, even while she felt the justice and truth of the remarks.

"I am sure," returned the lady, with a weary sigh, "I don't want to quarrel. I shall be content to retire to some small town on the Continent, and to spend the rest of my weary existence there. Why not? I dare say others as good as I have gone to such places. I am quite ready to give up the game. If I could only persuade Andrew to reform, and to intrust the education of his children to you, I would very readily enter a convent, and make an end of the whole matter."

"I am very much obliged to you for your good wishes," answered Miss Nightley, with an airy manner which annoyed her friend intensely; "but I had rather not be saddled with Andrew Bradstock—amiable gentleman!—and those interesting babes. Besides, I don't like people who run away from the battle. I am for fighting for the last inch of ground. The doctor—to return to our *moutons noirs*, by which I intend an English-

French phrase; *videlicet*, black sheep—is a very careful man. I only hope he will be too careful, and, in one of those interesting diseases incidental to childhood, let his beautiful charge slip through his fingers. Have you observed, Amethyst, what a curiously silent boy the child is?”

“He seemed intelligent enough to me, when I have had the chance of catching a glimpse of him; for, whether by accident or design, his grandfather takes precious good care to keep him out of your—or shall I say our?—way,” answered the lady. “I am not fond of noisy children.”

“Not even your own,” said Miss Nightley, who seldom forewent the opportunity of sticking a pin into the feelings of her best friend.

“Not even my own,” answered the lady, calmly; “although their lungs are sound enough, to judge by the noise they make. This little fellow in question does not speak much, I hear; if so, all the better.”

“Not at all, I believe: he only grunts. But what of that? it is all the same. There he is, and we cannot get him out of our way at present, so

we must content ourselves, and sit down to our meals, as *Lady Macbeth* says, 'with what appetite we may.' "

As there was no possible use in continuing the conversation, Lady Amethyst put an end to it by rising and walking to her bed-room, where the companion did not follow her; but, taking up a volume of Vauvenargue's "Reflections," read with great gusto a good many maxims against humanity, scoring the book with a sharp, strong thumb-nail at any particularly ungracious passage.

While she was occupied in this amiable, pleasant, and congenial—at least, so to her—manner, Lord Broadacres and little Felix were in the park, enjoying themselves, like two children as they were, in the spring sunshine. The little boy was mounted on a white sheltie as tame and gentle as a dog and as full of tricks as a puppy; and to guard against these tricks the stout old Earl had the leathern end of a leading-rein twisted round his left hand, while in his right he held a stout stick. The boy's right hand was full of primroses and violets which his grandfather had picked for him,

and his left stoutly held the reins of the pony and jerked them now and then with little effect; sheltie cropping the thick grass with great composure, and being in no hurry to move on at more than a snail's pace.

A more handsome, venerable-looking old gentleman than the Earl it would have been difficult to find. He held himself upright as a soldier; and, although his stout gray tweed suit was not of much finer material than that made up for a game-keeper or a shepherd, he looked every inch of him, as the doctor phrased it, a nobleman and a gentleman. Between the doctor and the nobleman and the little boy there had grown up a great friendship. Perhaps that term ought only to be applied to the feeling existing between Doctor Sangrado and Lord Broadacres. The latter idolized his grandchild and thought him perfection, and the devotion and care for Emmy's child exhibited by Sangrado was attributed by his lordship to the loyal devotion felt by the doctor for the great family of which the Earl was the head.

The Earl was, therefore, not surprised to find

the doctor walking towards them, and greeted him kindly when he came.

"Well, Doctor," said he, "your charge is well in health."

"As well as can be in health," said Keith Morton, kissing the little boy. "I confess I wish he would speak more."

The boy turned to the doctor with a bright look, but never spoke. He pointed out the flowers and the pony, and smiled. Some noise he made, but it was scarcely articulate. The doctor shook his head.

"Well, well," said his lordship, stoutly, "I've no fears about him. Some boys are slow in their tongues. The very best men England has had were not very brilliant as boys. I can only say that I've known many children very backward when young who made bright men afterwards."

"Let us hope that will be the case here," said Sangrado, kindly. "Look! the lad does not want intelligence." He took from his pocket a little oval red morocco case, and opened it: it contained a beautiful miniature of a young lady, a miniature

which few could look at without admiring. "Say, who is this, Felix?"

The child smiled, and dropped the violets and primroses to take hold of the doctor's hand. Then, slowly, and almost with pain, he uttered the syllables, "Mam-ma," which the doctor had with some difficulty succeeded in teaching him.

"Don't bother the child, Doctor," said the old nobleman, testily. "Put up the portrait. We don't want him to speak. He and I understand each other pretty well; don't we, Felix?"

Felix nodded and smiled; nay, he put up his rosy mouth for his grandfather to kiss.

"Say that child has not sense!" cried the old gentleman. "He has more sense than ninety-nine out of a hundred of us have. He has the sense to hold his tongue."

"Yes, poor fellow! but is not that just the sense that we do not want him to have just now? We want a child to prattle and chatter. There is too much said in the world about talkers. I am sure they are much more pleasant people than your

silent fellows who catch up the words their neighbours let fall and make mischief of them."

"Very good, Doctor," said his patron; "you are quite right there; and no doubt Felix will prove you so. Don't you see that the boy is a thoughtful lad? He is evidently laying in a stock of ideas which he will vent some day and to some purpose. The oak takes a much longer time to come to perfection than a French bean."

"Well, well," returned Sangrado, with a smile, "I can only be too happy to agree with your lordship. We will regard this little fellow as an oak: he is sturdy enough to be one. When he comes forward in all his strength and carries on and renews the race of Bradstock, I dare say people will not care if he be rather silent than fluent. Look at him, how he watches us. I wonder whether he be trying to understand us. Felix, what are you thinking of?"

The little boy passed his hand, into which the old nobleman had again put sweet violets, over his eyes, and then turned them from one speaker to another as if with a painful effort to communicate

something. Then he touched the doctor's breast-pocket—a pocket on his left breast, into which he had placed the red morocco case—and said, "Mamma! mamma!"

"Hear him," said the old nobleman, with dignity. "The boy knows very well that we are talking about the family, and called for his father. My boy," he continued, solemnly, "papa is in heaven. Thank God that His will is done."

The doctor looked down to the fresh-springing earth. The air was warm and balmy, and from the park and fields the soft air came carrying upon its unseen wings the scents of spring. He had other thoughts than Lord Bradstock—thoughts not of heaven, but of earth.

"I will leave," he said, "your lordship still with the boy. I am called to the Retreat to see a patient of mine. Good morning. Good-bye, Felix."

The little silent boy waved his tiny hand and smiled. The sheltie turned round of its own accord and trotted under the wide-spreading beeches, and Lord Bradstock strode sturdily after

it. The doctor walked forward through the park on his errand, thinking, as he walked, if, after all, it should be so.

“Her opponents and his will triumph, then ! I have feared it for years—feared it. How curious are some accidents ! What a thrill the simple touch of that boy gave to my heart—to my heart, poor heart ! Up in heaven ? No, alas ! I hope she is not there, while I wear her so constantly in my heart of hearts.”

CHAPTER XVI.

A TURN OF THE BALANCE.

It happened naturally enough that as Sister Martha got well Sister Agatha grew ill. Six years of confinement, even with the mild excitement of religious exercise, will generally work strange things upon a man or woman. The hot, burning, constant love for one, the love which Emmy had nursed and fanned into a flame many months after it had died down—or would have died down naturally—had now grown cold, past revival!

It was not unnatural that the heart should feel void and empty after this, nor that the sweetly conscientious little woman should upbraid herself bitterly for thus leaving, or permitting herself ever

to forget, so good, so kind, so excellent a husband. Many harsh reproaches were uttered, many bitter tears were shed in the silence of the night; but all to no purpose. There was the fact: Emmy's heart was void; the dead love was dead. Felix Lord Somers, with all his beauty, his boldness, his high rank, could be thought of without a single pang. The old wound might be touched now without making the wounded one start. The scar had even almost grown out: perhaps a cicatrice might have been seen, but hardly even that. Nothing could make the old wound bleed afresh.

Nor was Lady Somers one in whom the maternal feeling was very strong. As part of the adored husband, she had clung to and loved her baby, until that strange, half-jealous, half-fearful impulse had come upon her which forced her to leave it. After she had been assured, in the midst of her loneliness and mental distress, that the child was well, well cared-for and loved, and, indeed, loving others, she let grow up in her heart a sweet yet bitter jealousy which soon had gained a fearful mastery over her.

Had she thought that the child had pined and cried for her, she would have gone back, through any difficulty or danger, to have been with it and to have nursed it. But when she heard, day after day, of its thriving, of its growing finer, larger, and stronger, of its being nursed and caressed by its grandfather, and even of the love it exhibited to its wet-nurse and Miss Lotty Morton, the jealousy she had nursed in her bosom, like a snake, grew active and was no longer dormant, but rose and stung her.

"I am alone," she would cry, wringing her hands and staring with tearless eyes upon the dull cold wall of her little dormitory—"I am alone, a widow and an orphan too, and they take from me even my child's heart! God help me. O Thou who art the Father of the fatherless, take up my cause and avenge me."

There was a great calling for vengeance, in those long, lonely days, with this poor, weak, jealous heart. If we are hit, we like, like children, to hit back; and perhaps the very wisest saying, as well as the hardest to understand in the whole world, is

that which bids us turn the other cheek to the smiter, and not to give back the blow, but rather to give a kiss for a blow. That was the one behest against which Lady Somers struggled, and cried out, refusing to be comforted. In being proud of her husband she was proud of herself; and, more than that, in her very humility she had nourished one of the very finest roots and plants of pride that perhaps any woman could cultivate.

"Family!" she would mutter: "who cared for their family or their pride, their coronets or their splendid fortune? The Everinghams were as good as the Bradstocks, any day—of an older family, if not ennobled. I cared not to come into their family or their titles, but simply for him, dead angel that he is." In those days the wound was fresh and tender, and bled easily upon any recollection. "And because I was humble and lowly of heart, and did not claim my right, see where I am! see how I have fallen!"

A copious flood of tears should have put this fire of pride out; but it only so far moistened the burning embers that it kept it in, and made the

fire burn lower, perhaps, but with a more concentrated heat. The error of this unhappy lady was not an uncommon one. She had merely mistaken pride for humility; and pride really does put on the disguise very cunningly, so that it is not to be wondered at if we are sometimes deceived. It was her pride that kept her from urging her husband to introduce her as his wife, as well as the timid feeling which half persuaded her that he might be taken from her.

A struggle of a very complicated kind, a feeling of lassitude and illness, an unformed determination to hide herself from the world, kept Lady Somers a prisoner in the Retreat, and the advice of Father Gargle tended to retain her there. But there came a time when the flood again rose and floated away the almost wrecked bark from this haven of refuge.

Sister Martha grew well, and her kind nurse grew ill; so that, by the time the convalescent was well enough to nurse the new patient, the little couch was occupied by the heroine of this story. She exhibited in her illness none of the restlessness,

the impatience, and the inquietude to which, when in good health, she gave way. She was ready, like the drooping lily of the song, to bow her head and die. She did not complain, and went about her duties meekly and without a murmur, with one great desire at her heart, which she fancied no one saw, till, one day, as she knelt in prayer, something touched her heart, and it, for a moment only, stood still.

Martha ran to her and endeavoured to revive her; but it was a very "near miss" for the arrow of death. It had glanced, and, luckily, had not hit the mark; but, happily, the poor lady still lived.

The Lady Superior was consulted, and the patient "came to," merely to open her pretty eyes very widely, and to shut them again with a nervous twitching about the eyelids which frightened Martha. The Lady Superior, as became her, scorned to express any alarm; and a feeble old fellow, who was admitted, merely beyond a grating, to communicate with these sisters, was sent for Dr. Morton, and bade to use as much haste as he could.

The doctor was walking across the soft, spongy

turf of the park, intending to call at the Retreat, when the messenger met him. The news that another sister was ill did not disturb him. "They are nervous, lonely, shattered women," he said, "and likely to fall ill one after the other. People in such a situation are like a row of skittles: knock one down, and the rest fall."

With this homely simile the doctor, seeing something like a washed-out shade of anxiety in the face of the feeble messenger, turned to him. The old man was eager to speak.

The "mother," he said, had told him that it was a case of life or death. Hereat the doctor hurried.

When he entered the Retreat there was not much hurry there. When the Gaul was at their gates, the Roman senators debated; and these religious women, as brave, and perhaps more sedate than the conscript fathers, would have gone on with their calm routine of prayer and thanksgiving if Death had been mowing down every other one of them. They were rather calmer and quieter, that was all; and the silence of the house fell like a shade upon Keith Morton; for, all around

outside, the buds were bursting, the birds were singing, and earth and sky seemed vocal with the coming spring.

The face of the patient was turned from him as the doctor sat down. The Lady Superior had been called away to welcome Father Gargle, who had looked in on his return from town, and Martha was alone with the patient. The doctor took the small white hand and noticed the wedding ring upon it. It was almost pulseless, for another fainting fit had succeeded the first. Morton did not look upon his patient, but on his watch; and Martha, praying that Father Gargle might detain the mother, bent her gaze earnestly upon him. "This patient is very low: has she fasted too much? As if you women needed to fast!" he said to himself. "Well, well, we must do all we can to bring her back. Give me some salts and stimulants. Turn her face towards me, and I will apply them."

It was with an almost mechanical precision—for he was *distract* and absorbed—that the doctor applied the jeweller's wool, which he took from his pocket-case, to the salts, and, turning the

bottle, let it absorb the ammonia. When he cast his eyes again on his patient she lay with her pale face turned towards him ; and the light from the little window of the sanatorium falling on it, showed with full effect the worn, but still fair features of Lady Somers.

It was well, perhaps, for the doctor that Sister Martha knew the patient's story. Keith Morton was a strong man, but he shook as if suddenly stricken with ague. Then he turned deadly pale, and, with an irrepressible impulse, knelt down beside his patient, and, placing his hands as if in prayer, gave one great sob, as if to relieve his heart, which was so full.

"Oh, Emmy! Emmy!" he said, softly; "I have sought you, sorrowing, many a day, and have found you near me and at home, but only found you, alas! when you are to be taken from me for ever. But God's will be done. He alone is wise. His wisdom——" He could say no more, but bent down his heavy head and prayed silently, letting no tears fall, in his sorrow and dismay.

Not so the little sister. With an energy that

did her credit, and a volubility which was seldom heard in that silent Retreat, she took the doctor by the shoulder and shook him as she poured words of comfort into his burdened heart.

"Come, come," she said, "Dr. Morton; you, who are so full of expedients, should not be idle. She is not dead or dying, I can tell you. She only wants to get away from here, and is pining for new scenes, and for the sight of her child, and for some one else, too, whom she loves. Here, take the salts yourself: you need them. And here is some brandy—some vinegar. Do you want anything else? Shall I run and call the Superior?"

Her energy gave him life again. He chafed the temples and applied ammonia to the nostrils, while Sister Martha succeeded in chafing the cold hands, and even in getting the patient to swallow a small portion of wine. In a few minutes a faint colour came back to the lips and cheeks, the eyelids again trembled, the brow was once more slightly contracted, and then the sweet, patient eyes opened, and fixed a wondering, steady gaze upon the doctor. In a moment they again closed,

and Emmy murmured, "Thank God: *he* is here!"

Then it was that Dr. Morton may have been said to have almost rivalled Sister Martha, not only in activity, but in tears; for two or three vagrant drops overran his eyelids and fell upon his chest as he bent over the patient.

"There, there," said Martha; "I think that will do. I can answer for the rest, Doctor: leave me alone. It is no longer a case for you. Call again in an hour or so, and you shall see what a sudden cure a female physician can effect. You snatched me from death's door when it was about to close on me: I will see what I can do to return your kindness."

"Thank God! thank God!" murmured the doctor, placing his protecting hand on his patient's forehead, and holding with a firm, warm pressure the soft little womanly hand. "It was very, very long to wait; it was cruel of her to keep my sad heart in suspense and misery; but I have at last found the pet lamb I had lost." He bent down lowly and reverently, and placed his lips upon the forehead and left there a brother's kiss. Sister

Agatha felt the lips of the man whom she had so distrusted touch her, but she did not turn away; nay, the doctor fancied that, from the soft hand he held, his own received a gentle pressure.

"Then we shall see you again in an hour or two? Better make it two," said Sister Martha, archly turning suddenly upon him. "Or say to-morrow morning. There can't be any hurry now. There is no danger, you know."

"One who has lost a treasure for so long a time," replied the doctor, divining from the sister's look that she knew his story, "is not in a hurry to leave it. Nevertheless, I will call again in two hours. In the meantime I will go and tell my lord."

"Well, sir, you know best," said the little woman, whom the black serge dress and the habit had found a woman and left a woman still, as fond of a match as if she lived in Mayfair or in Bloomsbury—"you know best, of course. I should not tell anybody till I had heard from her own lips what her intentions were."

The doctor shook his head.

"Madam," said he, "I have waited a long

time; I have endured much sorrow; I have nursed a passion which has almost wrecked me and rendered me a purposeless man; but I do not believe in anything at all approaching to unfairness. It is due to Lord Bradstock that he should know that his son's widow is here. It is wrong, perhaps, to cite a profane poet's words in this house; but I am better read in the poets than the fathers, and one of them told us, long, long ago, that 'corruption wins not more than honesty.' I must go to the Abbey. Good day. In three hours, let us say, I will call again."

Doctor Sangrado took up his hat and bowed to the little woman with the respect he would have shown to his sovereign, and then, with a heart beating more quickly and joyfully than ever, took a hurried farewell of friendly Sister Martha.

The spring evening was closing in as he left the Retreat, and, taking the shortest way, passed through some beechen woods to a little gate which opened on the park of Lord Bradstock. The birds were twittering and chirping to each other, as if they were recounting the events of the day previously to

going quietly to roost; the woodlark was giving an evening edition of the day's news to his mate; and the advanced guard of a flight of rooks, which was coming in from a long afternoon fly, turned round to his clanging rear-guard, and with a croak informed them that the doctor carried no gun. The rabbits in the gray light frisked under the boles of the trees; and the deer were gathered in pretty groups beneath the outspreading branches of the two Sisters, those celebrated cedars for which Broad-acres was famous. The doctor's heart was full of joy and sympathy with all things; and although the long years had passed emptied, perhaps, of mirth, but not of usefulness and duty, he bent his head, and, as he walked swiftly on, thanked God for the sorrows he had received and the lessons and patience they had taught.

Lights were shining from the Abbey; for the Honourable Andrew was there, and held "high jinks," as he called it, with some of the county families; for with them his chance was not considered desperate. Sudden deaths, as one old lady asserted, do run in families just as great ages do,

and Andrew might be the great lord yet. Lady Amethyst, with that wonderful command of facial play which one sees in society, and with a sweet dress just received from town, sat near the piano and delighted the younger ladies by turning over and descanting upon some not very new Italian airs; while Miss Nightley, who took in and really read with great interest the "Quarterly Review," was, with a lucidity which appeared surprising to the agricultural intellect, proving to two or three young squires that the corn laws were alike beneficial to the landlord, the tenant farmer, and the peasant, and that they could not, ought not to be, and should not be repealed.

John Thomas was just nearing the door to announce that the dinner was served, when the door-bell of the Abbey clanged again.

"Bless us!" said he: "why, I counted twelve on 'em. She can't have asked thirteen! if she have bin an' done it, there's bad luck to follow. The old lord won't dine with 'em, neither; and I think he's about right. I'd rather have something snug an' 'ot than these grand dinners."

With this sentiment on his mind he opened the door, and was startled to find that it was only the doctor; but, as John Thomas took all his notions of propriety from the head of the family, and that head always treated Dr. Morton with the highest respect, John Thomas followed suit.

Sangrado stared at the bright livery of the man in an abstracted way, but was wherewithal so joyous, fresh, and jovial, that, as John afterwards said, he looked at least ten years younger.

"Is my lord within?" he asked.

Yes; he was in: he was in the little Palladian parlour, from which many years ago Sangrado had walked dejected and saddened.

"He is not going to dinner with Lady Amethyst and the rest on 'em," John remarked, creaking on the points of his toes in new pumps, and in his manner harmlessly confidential. "I dessay he'll be glad to see you, sir," he added, and then to himself whispered that "a heasy chair, a glass of bitter, or somethin' warm on this fresh spring night wouldn't be bad—infinately better, in fact, than handing about plates and dishes with a

napkin wrapped round one's thumb, or standing behind Lady Amethyst's chair seeing other people eat."

So, beaming in a friendly way on the doctor, John creaked away to the parlour, opened the door softly, and made his lordship, who was meditating quietly, rather start by announcing Dr. Morton.

"Come in, Doctor; come in," said the old nobleman, warmly. "The boy's all right at your house, I suppose? He will be coming to us soon: a fine fellow—a fine fellow!"

"He is quite well, I believe," said Sangrado, his face flashing up brightly and boldly with great joy; "but I have not come to speak of him. Oh, my Lord, I congratulate you: all the mystery is cleared up; I have found her!"

"Found her!" said Lord Bradstock, with a puzzled look. "Found whom? Not your mare—you had not lost her?"

"Tush!" said Sangrado, with a good-humoured impatience; "no. I have at last found Lady Somers, your son's wife, and mother of this boy, whom you prize so much as your heir."

"God bless me!" cried his lordship, sitting down and gasping for breath. "Well, that's sudden. I had forgotten all about her. Well, well, where has she come from?—from London, I suppose—and what does she want?"

"Alas!" said Morton; "very little now. She has long been a sister in our good father's Retreat, living near us, breathing the same air, scorning our state, spending her life in quietude and prayer."

"In a Retreat!" said his lordship, associating somehow the name with poverty and distress: "that must never be. Let her come here. Bring her home at once. My son's widow is mistress of this house."

CHAPTER THE LAST.

CLOSING SCENES.

IF the doctor were only as successful with every patient as he was with this last one, his time would have been worth at least a guinea a minute. By the time he had fully assured Lord Bradstock, and had, indeed, taken one or two glasses of that excellent Madeira which the butler very conscientiously kept, so far as he could, out of the way of everybody except the Earl and himself, Dr. Morton insisted on returning to his patient, but was persuaded to lighten his journey by a cigar, a profane cigar, which kept him company across the park, and which he with delicate forethought threw away directly he approached the ugly old Retreat.

But it did not look ugly any longer in his eyes. The moon was up, and shed a silver light over the trees, and lighted up the solemn building, not old enough to be venerable, but—like some old gentlemen, we will not say old ladies—quite old enough to be unpleasantly ugly to any one else but the doctor. When he reached the house it was something more than a blow to him to be told by Sister Martha that his patient was so well that she had fallen into a sweet and refreshing sleep, and that he might come in the morning, when, no doubt, he could see her. The wicked little sister pitilessly shut the door and talked to him through the *grille*, greatly to his discomfiture. But he went away full of happiness; and his sister Lotty, who had been pining at his absence, nearly danced with joy, to the great trouble of Mrs. Lapis, when she saw how well her brother looked, and heard the joyous news he had to tell.

“I say, Lotty,” said he, giving her a kiss, “there will be some chance for Dr. Juniper now, I think. Shall I write to Mr. Hosier and ask him to draw up the marriage settlement?”

“Horrid Mr. Hosier!” said Lotty. “Why, he has been making a comic song on the doctor’s new patent machine leg. I will have nothing to say to him. But what time shall we breakfast to-morrow, Keith? Shall it be at two? or earlier, if you like.”

The doctor only answered by a happy sigh. “Ah,” said he, “Lotty, I shall sleep to-night, for I am happy and at rest.”

Keith Morton was as good as his word. He slept well and soundly, and, as a reward for such well-doing, awoke with the birds. His sister Lotty was, however, up before him, had the breakfast ready, and was as merry as the conventional cricket is understood to be. Before breakfast was finished little Felix came in, merry, affectionate, and gentle, but as silent as heretofore. The good doctor sighed as he looked at him, but was too full of happiness and hope to utter one word of doubt.

How is it that, when on the very threshold of happiness, we trifle with it? Before he went to the Retreat, which, as we know, was an establishment of early habits, and one which rose with

the sun and put up its praises and prayers with the morning birds, our dear doctor troubled himself more than he was wont about the physic to be sent to the poor. He still kept for their benefit various simples, cordials, and drugs, and was careful, in hastening to his own happiness, that the misery of others should not be forgotten.

When he at last arrived at the Retreat, he found that Sister Martha had managed matters so well that all alarm had subsided—alarm which had been felt, not shown—and that, the prayers being put up at the time of his visit, the convalescent sister was the only witness of the meeting of the lovers; that is, if one can be called a witness who, upon proper occasions, with a delicacy that did her honour, popped discreetly out of the room. Lady Somers was already up, sitting by a cheerful fire, for the spring morning was chilly; and on the table by her were books of devotion, and some spring flowers which scented the room.

It is to be recorded to the doctor's credit that, although he hardly knew what he said, he went through the usual routine of inquiring after his

patient's health, and of even feeling the pulse ; but it was precisely at that moment when the eyes of the patient and physician met, full, openly, and without disguise, that Sister Martha, who, as a looker on, would probably have understood the game better than either of the players, was discreetly or indiscreetly found to be absent.

It is probably worth noticing, also, that although Keith Morton may be considered as the injured party throughout the transaction, or certainly the most innocent of offence, that his eyes fell before the searching look of Emmy, who seemed to read the very secrets of his soul.

"Madam," he stammered, "my dear lady, I cannot tell you what relief it is to me that I find you safe and well, and that I hear from your friend that you have not been exposed to trouble or to danger, but have been safe here, safe from injury or hurt. Alas, madam, you do not know what pain you inflicted upon all those who loved you, and who sought you, day after day, week after week, long, dreary year after year !"

"Upon *one*," she said, "upon one only, can I see or hear that the sorrow has told."

She looked at him now, again, but with scarcely so firm a gaze, and some sweet trembling note in her voice struck upon his ear and made him lift again his eyes to hers. He saw a gentle film come over them, as if Love had clouded them against his too full power—something of that delicate mist which veils the eyes of those who sorrow for another's pain—as she looked at him, and his heart beat responsively in tender grief for the pain, even of compassion, that she felt. And, as she gazed, the eyes, soft, delicate, and yet so bright, filled with sweet tears, and she rose from her seat, or, rather, sinking from it on her knees, she knelt before him.

"Oh, sir," she cried, "forgive me if years ago I pained you and wounded that heart which is so faithful, so gentle, and so good! I was blind then: I see all now. After many years of solitude and prayer, wisdom has come, and with it humbleness of heart, and the clearer knowledge which tells me how I have erred. Will you forgive me, my best friend, my brother?"

She took his unresisting hand and covered it with kisses, not unmingled with tears.

“Six years of sorrow,” said Keith, putting his strong hand upon her plenteous and golden curls, and pressing the dear head to his heart—“Six years of sorrow, if they bring but what you say, are six golden, priceless gifts. Forgive you!” He raised her as he said this, and then himself knelt. “Forgive me, madam—forgive me that I ever dared to love one whom God has made so fair, and sorrow chastened till she is so good. Forgive me, too, if, alas! so far from ceasing from my crime, I love her now, and more—how much more, indeed!—than ever.”

“Forgive you, Keith Morton,” she answered, calling him for the first time by his name—“forgive you! I will not only forgive you, but bless and thank you for your love. It has saved me from despair: it has opened my heart. How can I thank you truly, but by giving you that heart you have conquered, softened, and saved?” And so saying, she bent down to him, and sought his lips with hers, and, having found them——

Well, even in a Retreat, after the storms of sorrow and the waves of trouble, human hearts will beat, and true love will assert itself; and, if we only have enough patience and faith, the right will win, and the wrong go to its own end.

It is supposed that passion is dramatic, and that lovers speak in measured cadences; and it was probably such a soft murmur, heard without, that brought back Sister Martha to the sanatorium.

She ran up—of course she could have known nothing about what, as the police-reporters say, had transpired; but she ran at once up to Mrs. Emmy, and kissed her eagerly and with great love.

"I told you," she said, "all about it—how he loved you all through, and how you should have loved him; and your heart had told you so long before I ever spoke, I'm sure. When will women learn to trust or to know their own hearts? If they would listen to the voice, how much happier they would all be! And now, Doctor," she continued, "you cannot take her away at once; but you will tell the grand family, of course, and they

will fetch her. The Retreat is no place for her now. She was among us—dear little soul!—like, you see, a heartsease sown amongst a bed of common thyme or marjoram, and looking innocently out in its sweet beauty from the homely herbs; she was not of us, though. Her heart is not broken now: it is mended. The Retreat is no place for her. She will leave us. It is only for such castaway, heart-broken waifs and strays as me;” and the little woman burst into a flood of tears, in which it was hard to say whether joy for her friend or sorrow for herself preponderated.

Keith and Emmy stood side by side, each with an arm round the waist of the little sister, who was drying her eyes, and alternately sobbing and laughing. It is supposed that, during this portion of the interview, Dr. Morton performed that feat of osculation on the lips of the little *religieuse* which he often boasted of in after-life, and of which—wicked man!—he never repented.

Earl Broadacres was as good as his word. In the course of the day he had a long interview with Father Gargle; and the “belted Earl” and the

chief of the Piscatorians parted with mutual respect, a respect which they never ceased to entertain for each other.

“As regards the members of Trinitarian Churches,” said the Earl, afterwards, “it, perhaps, does not so much matter what a man professes, providing he really and earnestly endeavours to carry out his professions.” Nay, the nobleman went so far as to subscribe largely to the priest’s charities, and the father never ceased to put up prayers for his Protestant patron.

The result of the interview was that, one fine morning, the Earl’s best carriage, containing himself and his daughter-in-law Lady Amethyst, called at the Retreat, and took from thence Sister Agatha, now dressed as a fashionable lady, and greeted, as well as parted with, as Lady Somers.

Miss Nightley was not, of course, of the party; but that estimable lady remained in the great hall, and was ready to welcome the new comer with the sweetest possible smile. Dr. Morton was also there, Miss Lotty Morton, a few private friends of the family, and last, and most assuredly not least, the

Honourable Andrew Bradstock himself, who wore a sporting coat, a red waistcoat, and exhibited a face to match it in colour. The welcome given was very cordial, but Lady Somers felt it embarrassing, and, but for Lotty Morton, might have been abashed at the by far too friendly welcome of Lady Amethyst and her henchwoman.

Timid, perhaps, about the child who was so curiously silent, and yet so affectionate, Lotty and her brother had asked Lord Broadacres that the interview between the mother and son should be in private; and it was, therefore, arranged that it should take place in the Palladian parlour, in which many of the scenes described had already happened. And it was here, therefore, that Miss Nightley was determined to fire off her last big gun. She stood staunch to the last, and assured Lady Amethyst that she had a trump-card still in her hand which would retrieve what they had lost of the game. To the parlour, therefore, all the family adjourned after the introduction; and here, though the sun shone in the windows, and the fire blazed, lighting up the stern countenances of the Cæsars

and the rich gilded backs of the books, there was yet something gloomy and depressing.

Miss Nightley, while they were waiting for the approach of the little boy, who was in the park on his pony, assured Lady Somers that she would find her son considerably grown since she had left him; at which phrase, said with all the artificial artlessness which so good an actor could command, Lady Amethyst laughed and Lord Bradstock frowned. Miss Nightley was about to render matters worse by an apology, when his lordship interposed, and sternly reminded those present that there were matters in every family to which it was, by common consent, considered impolite to allude.

"My dear son's wife," said his lordship, taking Emmy's hand, and lifting it to his lips with solemn respect, "will soon see her son. Here he comes."

Surely enough, there, upon the greensward, was the boy; a groom, running by his side, holding the pony's leading-rein; and the pony, glad that his work was at an end, and that he was approaching his stable and his rack, galloping. A prettier group could not have been seen, nor,

perhaps, a prettier boy than little Felix. Recognizing his grandfather at the window, the boy pulled up his pony sharply, and made impatient signs that he wanted to dismount; but before the groom could assist him he had leaped from the saddle and came running to the open window.

All the mother's love came back to Emmy, as she saw the child purified of jealousy or distrust, and she looked up with a beaming smile to the doctor, whose face she startled to see was anxious and overclouded.

"Did you observe, my lady," said Miss Nightley, after a long pause, and in a whisper, which went like a knife through everybody, "how silent the little fellow is? He never speaks."

"Let me present you, my lady," said the Earl, with an assumed sternness of manner, meant, indeed, for an answer to the suggestion of the companion, "to your son, to Lord Somers, heir-presumptive to the Earldom of Broadacres. May he long wear the title and enjoy the fortune after I am dead."

The mother, with her eyes full of tears of joy,

knelt down and kissed the child, who put his pretty hands upon her golden curls and caressed them, and stared with innocent and vacant look into her face. But, alas! he said nothing, but only smiled, with stupid wonder, on his grandfather, who said to him, "This, Felix, is your mother—Felix, your mother, your mamma."

Lady Somers turned very pale, untied her pretty bonnet and laid it aside, and, kneeling down, put her arms round the child's neck and kissed him, crying—

"Yes, my dear, my darling! I have found him at last! My dear boy! my son—my son!"

The doctor opened the portrait he had in his hand, even at the risk of betraying his secret to envious eyes, and secretly showed it to the boy; but the child was too much taken up with Lady Somers, whom he seemed to regard as some new live toy to be fondled and played with, and he looked up to his grandfather to aid and abet him in that persuasion. A cold fear seemed to seize on the young mother. Her eyes dilated: her heart quickened in its beating. She feared that the



child might be dumb. She dared hardly to speak to the boy, lest in a moment his silence might confirm her fears.

Miss Nightley, who had never, as may have been surmised, liked Lord Broadacres, now looked at him with open scorn and defiance. The old nobleman, trembling, and scarcely knowing what to do, bent down and tried to offer some homely comfort to the mother; and Lotty, on her part, did so as well; whilst the doctor, with faint hope, put the portrait directly before the eyes of the child, who gazed from one to the other, from the picture to the original.

"The little child, my lady," said the Earl, in an old man's voice, broken and apologetic, letting his own fears, which he had so often beaten back bravely enough, peep out—"the little child is sometimes strangely silent."

Then it was that Miss Nightley, taking up the two last words as a cue, brought out her last card, certainly a heavy one.

"Strangely silent, indeed!" she cried, with an acid harsh tone. "I suppose justice will be done to

one son, as well as to the other. Granted all their proofs and all the mystery were right, what then? Why, you know, Lady Amethyst, and you, Andrew Bradstock, Lord Somers, that, from an old clause in the title to this earldom, that child never can succeed to it. The boy is a fool, *an idiot!*”

The little party in the parlour were all silent enough as these words fell on their ears. Lord Broadacres was stricken dumb; Lotty looked with fierce indignation at the speaker; Dr. Morton put forward his arm as if to stop her; the Honourable Andrew and his wife stood aloof from the crowd; and Emmy listened in fear and trembling at the words of a voice so much her enemy, yet so strangely familiar. When the dreadful words last uttered fell upon her ear she gave a long, low cry, like that of a wounded animal, and fell backwards pale and inanimate as if dead.

Then the doctor, turning round to Miss Nightley, cried out with an exceedingly bitter voice, “Woman, what call or cause had you to interfere? you have killed her!” and, most strange of all, as the doctor knelt to aid her, the bright, wondering face of the

boy changed to an expression of sadness and grief; and, as he leaped forward to embrace the fainting form, he cried out, "Mamma, dear mamma! she is dead!" Terror had broken through the chains which bound him in silence, and at the magic touch of filial affection the boy's tongue was loosened.

Is there anything more to be said? Of course Lady Somers did not die; and of course the sweet kisses and words of her son soon revived her. The sweet nature of Emmy forgave the stab, and she readily pardoned Miss Nightley; only that lady preferred to retire in her defeat, and her shadow never darkened again the walls of the Abbey. She had played her last card, and it was not of a winning suit. She was, as we know, of an imperious nature, and could not brook defeat. With her retired also the Honourable Andrew Bradstock and Lady Amethyst his wife; and, indeed, the pair went away with their friend and adviser to a continental retreat, where they spend their lives in quarrelling, and in educating, or mis-educating, their children, who look forward, it is

believed, to snug little diplomatic berths under Government. Probably they will be well fitted for their occupations, diplomacy being one of the extras taught so admirably by their instructress Miss Nightley. That lady, who is sufficiently instructed in many little arts herself, of a foreign, rather than of a strictly British character, spends her time in the society of foreign *litterati*, talking abstruse materialism, and very freely abusing her native country for its climate, its laws, customs, manners, and religion. Presuming that, upon so excellent an authority, they cannot err, many of the *savans* who surround her base their tone of thought and not at all infrequent attacks upon perfidious Albion.

The honest lawyer was actually, in due time, called upon to draw up a marriage settlement between Miss Lotty Morton and Dr. Juniper, of London, Miss Morton's dower being considerably increased by a very handsome sum given to her by the Earl of Broadacres, who, flourishing like an ancestral oak, came to London to be present at the marriage ceremony, which took place at

St. James's, Piccadilly. A baronet of ancient lineage arrived from Sussex to grace the occasion; and an extra clergyman, so difficult was it found to bind in the holy bands of wedlock the erratic Juniper, was called in on the occasion. The "happy pair," really so in this case, went to Crosbie to spend their honeymoon, and when there, it is probable, inspected the many insignia which the baronet had put up, and wondered at the fertility with which the old gentleman had managed to introduce his family motto, "*At spes, non fracta.*" There seemed, indeed, to be no limit to the new stock of hope which the family had laid in. Sir Crosbie himself intended to be shortly returned to Parliament, if, indeed, merely as a warming-pan to his son, a promising young gentleman, with advanced ideas, who bade fair to carry on the new generation in the career of progress which it had entered.

After the great fire at the Theatre Royal, Brydges Street, the Warlock's fortunes suffered a collapse; but that spirited and heroic gentleman took leave of his friends at a banquet given him

by his sympathizers, and delivered thereat a fine flowing speech, full of classical allusions of which the speaker did not understand a word, and which was, of course, written for him, and contributed by one of the many literary Bohemians by whom the Warlock was surrounded. He therein compared himself, as he thought, to a fire-office, but, in reality, to the fabled bird of Arabia, the phoenix, which, as we all have been told, periodically sets fire to itself, and arises, a newly hatched and freshly fledged bird, from its ashes. This simile the undaunted Warlock carried out. He astonished the Bedouin, or Bedoween Arabs; for, as every traveller nowadays has a new way of spelling Eastern names, neither author nor printer can be quite sure that he is right in his orthography. After that he went into Turkey, India, China, Australia, the Friendly Islands, New Zealand, and so worked his way round the world till he, ascending South America, played at California, and was finally created chief of the Black-feet or Black-leg Indians—which, he never could rightly determine. In their territory he was girt with a wampum


belt, spangled all over with beads, and clothed in full Indian costume, which he often exhibited to his friends. On his arrival in the Empire State he was very successful, and now bids fair, when he does return to take a final farewell of the "thaumaturgic art," as he calls it, to retire with a pretty fortune,

"Woman is, at best," some sage takes the trouble to tell us, "a contradiction still;" and, bearing this in mind, the reader will perhaps readily guess that Mrs. Stannard, when quite recovered from her fright and fainting-fit, received her husband with due obedience and gratitude. That young fellow, with all his faults, had one great virtue, constancy in love. He had grown, on his travels, much wiser; and when he presented himself to his newly found wife, in an elegantly furnished sitting-room in Brown's Hotel, Dover Street, he took care that all the paint which had disfigured his handsome face should have been completely removed, and that, instead of his clown's dress, he should be clothed in the most fashionable garments which the most expensive

tailor of the day—the Poole of the period—could supply. There was a great deal of acting, as well as a great deal of affection, in the way these two met. Safta could not forget *Mrs. Haller*, and Stannard carried about him the air of a repentant, as well as a forgiving *Stranger*. This little element of the unreal gave a savour to the real; and, in strict justice to Safta, it must be said that her love for and admiration of her husband had increased prodigiously since his successful onslaught on the captain. She had despised that creature while she used him; and it was but natural that when she had no further occasion for him, and indeed no hope or intention of again going on the stage—such was the sudden resolution she had made—she should even despise him more. A handsome husband of mature age, one who has seen the world, is rich, well-to-do, and has, moreover, shown himself brave and stalwart in proving his devotion to his wife, is not the proper man either to slight, cajole, or worry; and Mrs. Stannard struck her flag at once and for ever. And so these two young people were as

happy as their nature permitted them to be—which is the case, indeed, with most of us—and passed a pleasurable existence in going from one place to another, from England to the Continent, nay, even to America, like restless birds of passage as they were.

Captain Tophill was not burned to death, after all. Recovering from the very sound thrashing he had received, he luckily was sobered by the fright and pain, and, rushing to a window, was rescued by a fireman, whom he afterwards accused of having roughly handled and bruised him. Such is the gratitude of the great. Many years afterwards, when Mr. and Mrs. Herbert Stannard were living in peace, and we need not say affluence, at Brighton, they met the little weazened and withered captain there, ogling several of the passers-by with a field-glass, and wagging his wicked old head to Mr. Dunne, to whom he was remarking that some one upon whom his glass rested for a moment was a “monstrous fine gal.” The captain recognised his foe at once; and “one trial” having with him abundantly “proved the fact,” the gallant



gentleman, gallant only by courtesy, took a hasty departure and decamped.

The honest lawyer, Mr. Frederick Hosier, still lives and flourishes. He is as vehement in his declamation against the practice of law as ever; and from his pen proceed those stirring articles on law reform which ever and anon startle the readers of advanced papers and reviews, and then, unhappily, such is the contented apathy of this rich country, fall dead. The Thespian clerk of Mr. Naylor has long been in a snug little business for himself, his honoured master having for some years departed this life, and having been deposited in Kensal Green within a fortnight after the discovery of Lady Somers at Father Gargle's Retreat. The Thespian, true to his education, does a capital and lucrative business by advertising to gentlemen and tradesmen who are in difficulties, and by offering, in a purely Christian and lawyerlike spirit, to see them through all their troubles, the Court of Bankruptcy included, without exposure or expense. During this interesting, and of course disinterested process the Thespian manages to

absorb certain pecuniary gains which are necessary for carrying on his pure existence. Mr. Hosier, however, having met with one or two of his clients who have been so ungrateful as to complain, is cruelly laying a little trap for this charitable gentleman, which may probably bring him to grief.

And Doctor Sangrado, the reader may ask, was he rewarded, after all? The question is natural, perhaps, to those who have felt any interest in this story, and may be answered by an assurance that they who do what is right, and who act honourably and conscientiously, seldom fail to be rewarded, both in this life and in the next. Lady Somers, after her return to society, did not wear her title, which was, after all, only one of courtesy, very long. With the full consent of her father-in-law, who had grown almost as fond of her as he was of her son, she bestowed her hand where she had long given her heart, and made Dr. Keith Morton the happiest of men. Some of the fairest of the young ladies round about Broadacres, ladies of old families and honoured lineage, were her brides-

maids, and the poor of Bilscombe Regis were feasted royally on the occasion. Felix Lord Somers, bright, beautiful, rosy, and full of activity and happiness, went amongst the people and astonished many by his likeness to his father, and by his childlike yet intelligent happiness caused many to prophesy for him a brilliant and worthy career when he should be called upon to inherit the Splendid Fortune.

THE END.

